



٢٠١٥٧٩



# THE SONG OF GOD



# THE SONG OF GOD

TRANSLATION OF THE BHAGAVAD-GĪTĀ

---

BY DHAN GOPAL MUKERJI

LONDON

J. M. DENT & SONS, LTD.

**ALL RIGHTS RESERVED**

**PRINTED IN U. S. A.**

**FOR**

**J. M. DENT & SONS, LTD.**

**BEDFORD ST., LONDON W.C.2.**

**TORONTO**

**VANCOUVER**

**MELBOURNE**

**AUCKLAND**

TO  
JAWAHARLAL NEHRU  
OF  
PRAYAGA





## INTRODUCTION

Numerous translations of the Bhagavad-Gītā have been made into English, but, since it has seemed to me that many an able foreigner has sacrificed the emotional content of the book for the sake of scholarship, and its clarity of purpose to standards of accuracy, or requirements of verse, I, as a Hindu, have attempted a version with a different aim. I have sought to present the Gītā in English, not word by word, not in any arbitrary form, but with regard to its poetic significance, in the hope of conveying to the American reader those spiritual moods that its passages invoke in my countrymen.

In this song of the Universal Self of man lies a symbolism natural to the Oriental mind. It is a drama where, in Everyman, war wages between his own errors, which are legion, and his five senses led by his own Soul. The outer eyes of Everyman cannot clearly perceive the issues involved, so he summons the eye of his Soul to see and explain them.

The first two stanzas of the Gītā make this evident. Dhṛitarāshṭra, the blind Everyman, speaks as follows: "Tell me now, Sañjaya, O thou of supersensual vision, in the field of life—the field of religion—how fare they, my hundred sons, marshalled against the five children of my brother Pāṇḍu?"

Sañjaya, by means of his clairvoyant third eye,<sup>1</sup> then gives a detailed report to the blind Dhṛitarāshṭra, mentioning the names of different warriors and vassals on each side, and indicating the vast concourse of common soldiers who rise into his vision.

Dreamlike, all the characters appear as various aspects of Everyman. The Hindu habit of dividing man's personality into many parts and considering every human being as a five-fold weapon in the hands of his own Soul is very ancient. In the Upanishads as far back as 1000 B.C. is found the following: "In the beginning the Self was alone. . . . A lonely person sayeth, 'Let there be a wife for me that I may have offspring. Let there be wealth for me that I may offer sacrifices.' So is he made complete: to his Mind, the husband, is given Speech, the wife; Breath the child;

<sup>1</sup> The Hindu believes that every man has a hidden third eye in the centre of his forehead. In order to be reminded of his inner vision, he marks himself daily between his brows with ashes.

Eyes that are worldly wealth which he finds with their aid; Ears which are his divine wealth received through hearing. The rest of the body is his craft. This is the five-fold offering.”<sup>2</sup>

He who reads the Gītā bearing this symbolism of the first chapter in mind will find the succeeding verses less obscure, but it should not be forgotten that the meaning of the poem is not confined to its symbolism.

In the significant twentieth verse, Arjuna, the hero of the Gītā and the spokesman of the five Pāṇḍavas who represent the five senses opposing the hundred errors of Everyman, demands of his counsellor and charioteer, Kṛishṇa the incarnation of God, an answer to his far-reaching and difficult inquiry: “Is warfare righteous? Is it righteous to kill?” Thus begins the central theme of the Gītā. Arjuna questions God, the driver of his soul, regarding the ethics of all action. Let the Western reader close his eyes and ask this question of his own mind: “Is the war of life worth waging, is the struggle righteous, is the end justifiable?” In the Gītā is the answer and the explanation.

To all Hindus Kṛishṇa is a dual conception: he is God incarnated as God-man, and the Eternal Self of

<sup>2</sup> Brihad Āraṇyaka Upanishad, “Sacred Books of the East,” 1 Adh. 4 Brahm 17.

Man named Nārāyaṇa. Arjuna, on the other hand, Nara-Nārāyana, is the temporal Self of God, or Man-God. Within every human being resides Nara and Nārāyaṇa, Man-God and God-man, and the dialogue between them decides every significant undertaking of life. This is the simple allegory of the Gītā.

Every chapter is complete in itself and all the chapters together compose for Hindus the textbook of the spiritual life, defining varying temperaments and setting forth what the spiritual aim of each should be.

The history of the Gītā can only be inferred from the book itself, since those divinely imaginative ancient Hindus wrote poetry in place of history, and we have no other record of its origin. The Bhagavad-Gītā is incorporated in the gigantic epic, the Mahābhārata, which is more than double the length of the Odyssey and the Iliad combined. It was born during a battle in the presence of a dying hero. It reeks of the battlefield, but it speaks of all life. It rose like a high Himalayan peak of glory from the mire and horror of war. Its opening chapter is full of trumpet-tones, clangor of arms, and the roar of embattled hosts. As Homer filled the earlier part of the Iliad with the names of ships, so the author of the Gītā freighted his first verses with the sonorous titles of soldiers, captains, generals, kings

and gods, and the high-sounding names of their weapons.

The date of the Gītā is difficult to state with certainty. In it appear passages from the Upanishads and other ancient works which are, at least, twenty-six centuries old. In it we also find a few verses that were composed about eighteen centuries ago. But taken as a whole, the age of the Gītā is over twenty-two hundred years. It was transmitted orally for many centuries before it was first committed to writing. Even now many Hindu families have preserved it by word of mouth from generation to generation.

Probably it was first written down about 100 B.C. A few stanzas were interpolated within the next few hundred years. The reader will find, for example, that here and there, the Gītā speaks in favor of the caste-system, naming the highest caste as well as the lowest, and giving an impression of the rigid system that has existed in India until Gandhi, probably the greatest caste-destroyer in eighteen hundred years. But the older and the larger portion of the Gītā mentions no caste-system. Like the Upanishads, it suggests a society without rigid class distinctions. My belief is that the stanzas upholding the caste-system are interpolations of a later date. The reader can find other verses that may

be accounted for in the same way. Many passages suggest the poem's remote and almost primitive origin through references to ancient archaic rites and rituals. For instance, there is mention of the "southern passage of the sun." This has a great significance even in modern India. If a man dies between July and December, his soul may not travel on the sun to the north where lies Swarga, the Indian Valhalla.<sup>8</sup>

There are also allusions to primitive rites like the matter that we find in Frazer's "Golden Bough," and besides these, reference to the archaic ritual of the seasons.

I would draw the reader's attention to the universal reverence accorded to the Gītā by the Indians. The importance of the poem arises from three causes: *first*, its elimination of the differences between secular and religious life. The Gītā asserts that everyone is religious, since life itself is religion, and thus it proclaims a universal tolerance. The Hindu point of view permits no form of being to exceed the orbit of spirituality. Exist-

<sup>8</sup> Bhīshma, the great warrior of the Mahābhārata mentioned in the first chapter of the Gītā, though mortally stricken, refuses to die during that period; in order to occupy the time while waiting for the sun to return to the north, the ancient hero retold the Gītā to the assembled warriors, and thus was the song matured on the field of battle.

ence is a process of finding God within, and each man should follow his duty in such manner as to reveal to himself his own innate divinity. "Better is one's own Path, though imperfect, than the Path of another well made. Better is death in one's own way, for the way of another is fraught with fear."

*Second*, its unification of all ways of realizing God. On Hindu lips is frequently the quotation, "*Ye Yatha mam propadyente stam tathaiva bhajamjaham.*" ("At the end of each path there I await, for all ways are My ways.") The path of knowledge leads us to the same God as the path of love. Even he who makes an offering of fruit, flowers, and water, has prayed to Him to whom Christ and Buddha prayed.

*Third*, it presents in seven hundred verses the salient features of the mystical lore of ancient India. In the Gītā we find the epitome of the Upanishads which contain the essence of India's immortal wisdom. The invocation to the Gītā that precedes its recitation in a Hindu temple says, "The Gītā is the precious milk drawn from the udders of the Upanishads to nourish the soul. . . ." The Gītā also mentions the Sāṅkhya philosophy of Kapila, the materialistic philosophy, probably of Chārvāka, and it successfully elucidates Nirvāṇa, Karma, and Reincarnation—the three salient



teachings of Buddhism—without once mentioning the name of this religion.

For the modern American reader also, the Gītā has meaning. No Occidental can fully understand the Hindu temperament without the help of this singular poem. The most conspicuous Hindu of our time, Gandhi, says that the Gītā dictated to him the major decisions of his life.<sup>4</sup> Like Gandhi, innumerable Hindus have found in this book the basis of their life and work. It is the key to the Hindu character. It has superseded all the other scriptures of Hinduism. Though it stands in the same relation to them as the New Testament to the Old, yet it has almost completely replaced them.

Another reason for presenting the Gītā to the American mind lies in its philosophy of action, the most eloquent and subtle ever written. Since nearly all Americans lead active lives, this book holds truth for them, to which many, beginning with Emerson, have paid homage. The Gītā says, “*Na Karmanam anaramvat Naiskarmam purusxo.*” (“Neither by abstaining from action doth man attain tranquillity.”) “*Nyata Kuru Karmatwam,*” etc. (“Perform all prescribed deeds, for to do is better than not to do.”)

<sup>4</sup> Cantos III and XI.

*“Karmanya badhikaraste ma phalesoo kadachavam.”*  
(“Thy task is not concerned with the fruit of thine act. Let not the reward be the motive of thy deed, neither attach thyself to inactivity.”)

He who would make of his daily task a meditation may find in many sayings of the Gītā a justification for this age of industrialism in which the philosophy of action is appropriate to so large a part of the human race. The significance of the poem is not confined to India; many scholars and poets of Europe and Asia have translated it in the belief that it would give spiritual guidance to their peoples.

A word by the translator as to his rendering of the Sanskrit. The words Bhagavad-Gītā have been variously interpreted. Arnold translates them, “The Song Celestial.” Another scholar prefers the phrase, “The Lay of the Lord.” I choose “The Song of God,” as closer to the Hindu conception of the book as the song of the Universal Self of man.

A slightly archaic English has been used in order to suggest the authority of great age and tradition surrounding the original. Many Sanskrit words that in recent years have been included in the English vocabulary and have acquired a meaning foreign to the original, such as Karma, Māyā, Dharma, Yoga, etc.,

have been translated, although it has often been necessary to do so by a whole phrase or sentence. A literal translation of Sanskrit into English is impossible. No single words in a Western tongue have the associations that surround a Sanskrit word for an abstract idea. In English, such words as Absolute, Eternal, Infinite, are without vitality; whereas Brahma, Nirvāṇa, etc., although abstract in sense, pulsate with associated meanings that give life, and make the ideas themselves the realities of common experience. The number and delicacy of the words for religious and philosophical thought in Sanskrit is in contrast to the poverty of English in this respect. Misunderstandings of Oriental beliefs have been engendered in the West through the translation of such words as Nirvāṇa by "nothingness," Māyā by "delusion," etc.

Māyā, for example, has many meanings. Though often translated as Illusion in the sense of deception, there are contexts in which it means appearance. The Isha Upanishad makes clear that the Creation, the phenomenal world, is not considered a delusion, but rather a screen or mask of Reality. The deception it causes is not of itself, but in the mind of the observer who is unable to recognise the true nature of what he looks upon; the delusion lies in the fallibility of human

judgment that misinterprets the significance of appearance.

The following from the Isha Upanishad shows how the phenomenal world is thought of as appearance rather than illusion: “*Hiranmayena patrena stayasapihatam mookhum, yatta Pusana pa urinu satua dhar-maya dristaye*”—“O sun, thou golden mask that covereth the face of Truth, withdraw thy fierce light that I may gaze upon Reality.” Here the sun as a mask is not a delusion, for it is really there, but an appearance, which may cause delusion in the mind of him who seeks the Absolute. There are many other passages in Sanskrit literature which do not dismiss the world as an illusion, and in which the word *Māyā* obviously has the meaning of aspect.

But *Māyā* may also signify “becoming.” For instance: “The chief of the gods goeth in many forms by the art of His becoming,” says the *Bṛihadāraṇyaka* (2.5.19). Max Müller translates this: “Indra (the Lord) appears multiform through the *Māyās* (appearances).” Professor Hume prefers to use the word “magic” in this place. I use the phrase “art of becoming” as closer to the sense of the poem.

Now we turn to the *Gītā* and find that the word *Māyā* is used in the fifteenth verse of the seventh

chapter: “deprived of discrimination through Māyā.” The word in a derived sense may here be taken to mean “ignorance” or “delusion,” but its significance may be better expressed by “deprived of discrimination through the illusion of appearances.” The twenty-fifth verse, on the contrary, seems to indicate that Māyā is the “art” or magic of presentation. In the sixth verse of the fourth chapter, Māyā may be explained as “the process of God’s becoming,” or the drama of His self-projection.

In the Svetasvatara Upanishad (4.10) occurs a stanza which Professor Hume translates as follows: “Now, one should know that Nature (Prakṛiti) as illusion (Māyā) and the Mighty Lord as the illusion-maker (Māyī). This whole world is pervaded with beings that are parts of Him.” According to Müller, the stanza should read: “Know then Prakṛiti (Nature) is Māyā (art), and the great Lord the Māyin (maker); the whole world is filled with what are his members.” Thus it may appear that when scholars like Müller and Hume differ in their interpretations, the reader must rely on something rather more, or less, than scholarship to give him the sense of the original.

In the Maitrāyana Upanishad (IV-2) “changing

its dress in a moment like a dancer” describes one meaning of Māyā.

Therefore, having regard to all the difficulties in the path, I have rendered Māyā in such phrasing as its context seemed to require, trusting more to the meanings that the living traditions of Hindu India associate with Sanskrit words than to the opinions of scholars who are not Hindus by religion.<sup>5</sup>

Nirvāṇa is another word fertile in meanings. To render it as “Nothingness” will not do, for against such facile interpretation stands the Hindu tradition that makes Nirvāṇa the synonym of Mukti—liberation. The etymological meaning and first use of Nirvāṇa gives it the sense of “the blowing out of a burning candle.” Since it is the Hindu belief that when material desires are extinguished, human beings are liberated, it is evident how the word has come frequently to mean liberation.

In one context Nirvāṇa may stand for annihilation; in another for final emancipation. A lamp is put out,

<sup>5</sup> A famous living Hindu poet has said that no translation of Māyā is adequate which fails to give its two-sided meaning. To the Hindu “That” and “not That” are both aspects of one truth. Himself may be the garment of a man, yet the garment is not his *self*. Only by his appearance may he be known, yet he and his appearance are not the same.

but a soul is freed. In one context it reads: "release from Matter"; in another: "union with the Supreme Spirit." A reference to any brief Sanskrit dictionary will show that Nirvāṇa carries a gamut of meanings that run from annihilation to complete satisfaction, supreme bliss, and highest felicity.

Thus may the translator of Sanskrit be misled who is insensitive to the subtle indications of the text.

The word Dharma also presents difficulties. In one context Dharma means formal religion; in another, a man's duty; in still another, it is best expressed by the French word, *métier*. The Dharma of all men is to find God; therefore Dharma may mean religion. But what is the Dharma of a patriot? According to the Gītā, it is to support those to whom he owes loyalty, and in this connection, "duty" is a good English synonym for Dharma. But when we ask what is the Dharma of a writer, the Gītā answers: the single-minded pursuit of his art. In the case of the artist, then, Dharma means *métier*. Any man who rigorously disciplines himself by the cultivation of his proper temperament or bias of character, may be called a man of Dharma or religion. But the word "religion" scarcely covers all these meanings.

Punarjanma, usually rendered by "reincarnation,"

means the resumption by the eternal element of the soul of a form that is human, as the word "birth" to a Hindu means "to put on the limitation of a form."

Karma also has been rendered in several ways. It is not essential here to trace its resemblance to any Latin or Greek word; let us rather see what a Hindu considers to be Karma. When a mother gives birth to a child, the Hindu would say that she had made a Karma. She has created something which will transform *her* character. Karma, therefore, stands for those vital creations of a man that leave a definite mark upon his nature.

But there are other Karmas beside those of personal relationships, such as the Karma of a statesman. Here too the word symbolizes a man's creation, but in a larger sense. What also is the Karma of a writer or an artist? Surely, his works. His acts, his creations, born of his character, are his destiny, which, thus generated, spreads a net of good and evil far exceeding the span of a single life.

Other Sanskrit nomenclature will be found explained in the notes.

D. G. M.





## GUIDE TO PRONUNCIATION

Those who wish to pronounce clearly the Hindu names appearing in the following pages should bear in mind that the vowel "a" should be sounded in the same manner as in the English word "alms." Wherever the letters, "i" and "y" appear they should be pronounced as "y" in "hymn." "U" invariably has the sound as in the English word "put"; while the vowel "e" must be permitted the same ring as in "bed." As to the consonants, the safest course to follow would be to sound them all.

D. G. M.



# THE SONG OF GOD



## FIRST CHAPTER

*The blind King Dhṛitarāshṭra, the meaning of whose name is The Holder of this World, converseth with Sañjaya, who representeth his Inner Eye, and who seeth and describeth to his master all things near and far.*

### I. 1

Dhṛitarāshṭra spoke these words to Sañjaya, saying:  
Tell me now, Sañjaya, O thou of supersensual vision, in the field of life, the field of religion, how fare they, my hundred sons, marshalled against the five children of my brother Pāṇḍu?

### I. 2

And Sañjaya, the clear-seeing One, replied:  
Thine eldest born, Prince Duryodhana, beholding the forces of the Pāṇḍavas arrayed for war, consulteth his general-in-chief and teacher, Droṇa, saying:

### I. 3

O my master, look yonder at the cohorts of the Pāṇḍavas ready to give battle. They are led by the son of that Drupada, who was aforetime thine own pupil.

### I. 4, 5, 6

Here also are other heroes, mighty archers, the equals in battle of Bhīma<sup>1</sup> and Arjuna; <sup>1</sup> the invincible clan-leaders, Yuyudhāna, Virāṭa, Drupada, the valiant Dhrishtaketu, Chekitāna and the king of Kāshī; here is Purujit, best of men, and Kuntibhoja *and* Shaibya; the powerful Yudhāmanyu and the brave Uttamaujas, the son of Subhadra; and here are the sons of Draupadī, Lords of great chariots.

### I. 7

(Prince Duryodhana continueth, saying to Droṇa):

Let me also recount to thee, O Best of the Twice-born, the leaders of my own army, and those who are marked by distinction amongst ourselves. I will name them to thee, that thou mayest know them well.

<sup>1</sup> Bhīma is the second of the five Pāṇḍava brothers. He is the Hindu Hercules. Arjuna is the third and the most important of them all.

## I. 8

There are, after thyself, Bhīshma and Karṇa and Kṛipa, the victorious in war; Aśwatthāmān and Vikarṇa and Jayadratha, the son of Somadatta; <sup>2</sup>

And many other heroes also, well-skilled in war, armed with many kinds of weapons, who are determined to lay down their lives here for our cause.<sup>3</sup>

## I. 10

This, our army protected by Bhīshma's <sup>4</sup> might, is innumerable, but Bhīma's opposing army is easy of count.

## I. 11

Therefore, let every man at his post support Bhīshma and Bhīshma alone!

<sup>2</sup> Names of great heroes of Hindu mythology.

<sup>3</sup> By "our cause," Duryodhana means himself, his ninety-nine brothers and his blind father, Dhṛitarāshṭra, who opens the present discourse.

<sup>4</sup> Bhīshma was revered as the grandfather of all the sons of Dhṛitarāshṭra. Naturally, in the opening battle the honor of leading the charge fell to him.



I. 12

(Sañjaya, having thus recounted to the blind King the words of Duryodhana, now describeth the progress of the battle):

Then Bhīshma, the powerful grandsire of Duryodhana, that he might encourage the prince, gave forth a lion-roar and blew a blast through his far-sounding conch-shell.

I. 13

Then, following Bhīshma's, there blared forth all together other conches and kettledrums, tabors, trumpets and cowhorns, augmenting with their clamour the tumultuous sound.

I. 14

Then also, Kṛishṇa <sup>5</sup> and Arjuna, the son of Pāṇḍu, of the opposing side, seated in their magnificent chariot yoked to white horses, blew their heavenly conches.

I. 15

Kṛishṇa, Lord of Perception, sounded his horn, the Pāñchajanya; Arjuna blew the Devadatta, and (his

<sup>5</sup> Kṛishṇa is the charioteer of Arjuna, the fierce fighter, and personifies the conception of God-man, as Arjuna that of Man-god. *See* Introduction.

brother) Bhīma, the doer of fearful deeds, blew his great conch, Pauṇḍra.<sup>6</sup>

I. 16

King Yudhishtīra,<sup>7</sup> son of Kuntī, blew the conch named Anantavijaya, and Nakula and Sahadeva, their great trumpets, Sughosha and Maṇipushpaka.

I. 17, 18

The expert bowman, king of Kāshī, and the great warrior Shikhandī, Dhrisṭadyumna and Virāta, and the unconquered Sātyaki; Drupada and the sons of Draupadī, and the mighty-armed son of Subhadra, sounded each his mighty conch.

I. 19

And the thunder-stilling noise rent heaven and earth, and drove terror into the hearts of Duryodhana's brothers and vassals.

I. 20, 21, 22

Then, O Dhṛitarāshṭra, Ruler of Earth, seeing thine army arrayed for battle, Arjuna, whose ensign is an

<sup>6</sup> Schlegel translates these names by Greek and Latin paraphrases, as Gigantea, Theodotes, Arundea, etc. (See footnote, Telang, *Bhagavad-Gītā*, "Sacred Books of the East," p. 38).

<sup>7</sup> Yudhishtīra was the eldest or the first, while Nakula and Sahadeva were the fourth and the fifth of the Pāṇḍava brothers.

ape, raised his bow and urgently addressed his charioteer, Kṛishṇa, in these words: Place my chariot between the two armies, O Kṛishṇa, the Unsullied One, that I may see my fierce embattled foes! Before I fight, I would look upon those whom I am about to slay.

I. 23

I would observe the men who to please the evil-minded Duryodhana<sup>8</sup> take part on this battlefield against me.

I. 24, 25

Thus addressed by Arjuna, Kṛishṇa drove the excellent chariot to a place between the two hosts, facing Bhīshma, Droṇa and all the masters of the earth, and spoke:

Behold, Arjuna, behold here all the clansmen of Duryodhana drawn up before thee!

I. 26, 27, 28

And Arjuna, gazing now upon his kinsmen—and their sons and grandsons, comrades, teachers, and friends as well—arrayed there in the armies over against

<sup>8</sup> Duryodhana and his ninety-nine brothers, sons of the blind King, symbolize evil and error.

him, he, Arjuna, was smitten with deep compassion and spoke in great sorrow,

I. 28, 29, 30

Saying:

O Kṛishṇa, as I look upon all mine own people, eager for war, my limbs refuse to serve me. Lo, my mouth is parched. I tremble and my hair standeth on end. My bow, Gāṇḍīva,<sup>9</sup> falleth from my hand, and my skin is on fire. My mind is a nest of evil forebodings; I cannot stand upright.

I. 31, 32, 33, 34

I wish not for Victory, Kṛishṇa, nor sovereignty, nor pleasure. For of what avail, Govinda,<sup>10</sup> is sovereignty to men; of what avail is joy and even life itself, if those for whose sake empire, enjoyment and pleasure are desired—teachers, kinsmen, friends—are themselves to lose in battle life and fortune?

I. 35

Though they kill me, Kṛishṇa, I desire not to kill them—even for the sake of dominion over earth, ocean

<sup>9</sup> Arjuna's bow, Gāṇḍīva, has the same significance as Excalibur of the Arthurian saga.

<sup>10</sup> Govinda is another name for Kṛishṇa, meaning the Protector of the Universe.

and sky; how much less, then, for the glory of this world alone!

I. 36

What pleasure indeed could I gain, O Kṛishṇa, from the slaughter of the hundred sons of Dhṛitarāshṭra? By destroying those evil-doers, we ourselves shall be caught in the talons of sin.

I. 37, 38, 39

For how could it advantage us to destroy our own kin? Though they, with greed-darkened minds, see no evil wrought in the extinction of family, nor in hostility to friends, why should we, Kṛishṇa, who do so perceive clearly, incur this sin?

I. 40

When a family decayeth, its immemorial rites die also, and immorality surely then consumeth it.

I. 41

Through impiety, Kṛishṇa, the women of a family become corrupt; and when the women are corrupt, the intermingling of castes ensueth.

I. 42

This admixture of blood is destruction for the destroyer as well as for his victims. Even the ancestors fall from Heaven because no descendant performeth the proper rites; offering prayers, the sacred rice-balls, and holy water!

I. 43

From the misdeeds of the destroyers, issueth the confusion of race, and race-confusion doth annihilate the immemorial devotion to the Gods.

I. 44

We have been instructed that Hell is for such men whose religious practices in the household have been destroyed.

I. 45

We are, therefore, alas, in the grip of sin, for we would slay our own kinsmen to satisfy our thirst for the pleasures of dominion.

I. 46

Verily, it were better for me to be killed in this battle, unarmed and unresisting, by Dhṛitarāshṭra's armèd sons, than to incur such weight of evil deeds.

## I. 47

Thus spoke Arjuna in the midst of the battlefield, and casting away bow and arrows, sank down in the seat of his chariot, his mind overcome by sorrow.

*The end of the First Chapter, designated*

THE GRIEF OF ARJUNA

## SECOND CHAPTER

### II. 1

To Arjuna, thus overwhelmed with sadness and pity,  
and whose eyes were dimmed with tears, Kṛishṇa  
spoke,

### II. 2

Saying:

How is it, Arjuna, that in this strait thou art overtaken by a dejection unworthy of an Aryan—a disgrace and a very stumbling block in the path to Heaven?

### II. 3

Yield not to unmanliness, ill-befitting one like thee!  
Cast off this faintheartedness, Arjuna, and arise, O  
Scorcher of thy foes!

### II. 4

But Arjuna answered:

How can I use my arrows in battle against Bhīshma,



my grandsire, and Droṇa, my venerable teacher, who are worthy rather to be worshipped, O Destroyer of all opponents?

## II. 5

Surely would it be better to eat the bread of beggary in this life than to slay these great-souled masters!

If I kill them, all enjoyment of wealth, all gratified desire, is stained by their blood!

## II. 6

Indeed, scarcely can I tell which would be better, that they or we should conquer, for to destroy those sons of Dhṛitarāshṭra who oppose us, would be to extinguish forever the savor of life.

## II. 7

Overpowered by my helplessness, and with a mind in confusion, I supplicate Thee! Make clear to me that which is my good; I am Thy disciple. Instruct me, who have sought my refuge in Thee!

## II. 8

There is naught to dispel this sorrow which overpowereth my senses. Were I to obtain undisputed and

powerful dominion over all the earth, and mastery over the gods, what then would that avail me?

II. 9

Arjuna, having thus spoken to Kṛishṇa, Lord of the Senses, made end, saying:

‘I shall not fight!’ and with these words fell silent.

II. 10

But as he remained sorrowing thus in the midst of the two armies, Kṛishṇa, smiling a little, spoke to him as follows:

II. 11

Thou hast grieved for those undeserving of grief, Arjuna! Although thou speakest wisely, those who are still wiser mourn neither for the living nor for the dead.

II. 12

For never hath it been that I was not, nor thou, nor these Kings; nor shall we cease to be, ever.

II. 13

The self is not interrupted while childhood, youth and old age pass through the flesh; likewise in death

the self dieth not, but is released to assume another shape. By this the calm soul is not deluded.

II. 14

The impressions of the senses, quickened to heat and cold, pain and pleasure, are transitory. Forever on the ebb and flow, they are by their very nature impermanent. Bear them then patiently, O Descendant of Kings!

II. 15

For the wise man who is serene in pain and pleasure, whom these disturb not, he alone is able to attain Immortality, O Great amongst men!

II. 16

The unreal can never be; the real can never cease to be. Those who know the truth know that this is so.

II. 17

The Unnamable Principle which pervadeth all things, none hath power to destroy: know thou certainly that It is indestructible.

## II. 18

By *That*, immortal, inexhaustible, illimitable, Indweller, is the mortality of this flesh possessed. Fight therefore O Descendant of brave Kings!

## II. 19

He who conceiveth this Indweller, this Self, as slayer, or who conceiveth It as slain, is without knowledge. The Self neither slayeth nor is It slain.<sup>1</sup>

## II. 20

It is never born, nor doth It die, nor having once existed, doth It ever cease to be. Ancient, eternal, changeless, ever Itself, It perisheth not when the body is destroyed.

## II. 21

How can that man who knoweth It to be indestructible, changeless, without birth, and immutable, how can he, Arjuna, either slay or cause the slaying of another?

## II. 22

As a man casteth off an old garment and putteth on another which is new, so the Self casteth off its outworn embodiment and entereth into a new form.

<sup>1</sup> This idea is also found in the earlier Upanishads and inspired Emerson's poem called "Brahma."

II. 23

This Self, weapons cut not; This, fire burneth not;  
This, water wetteth not; and This, the winds dry  
not up.

II. 24

This Self cannot be cut, it cannot be burnt, it cannot be wetted, it cannot be dried. Changeless, all-pervading, unmoving, Eternal, it is the Unalterable Self.

II. 25

This Self is invisible, inconceivable, and changeless. Knowing that It is such, cease, therefore, to grieve!

II. 26

But whether thou believest this Self of eternal duration or subjected constantly to birth and death, yet Mighty-armèd One, hast thou no cause to grieve.

II. 27

For, to that which is born, death is certain; to that which dieth, birth is certain, and the unavoidable, giveth not occasion for grief.

## II. 28

Nothing may be perceived in its beginning; in its middle state only is it known, and its end again is undisclosed. What herein, Arjuna, is cause for grief?

## II. 29

One man perceiveth the Self as a thing of wonder; another speaketh of It as a wonder; others hear of It as a wonder, but though seeing, speaking, hearing, none comprehendeth It at all.<sup>2</sup>

## II. 30

This, which is the Indweller in all beings, is forever beyond harm. Then, for no creature, Arjuna, hast thou any cause to grieve.

## II. 31

Examine thy duty<sup>3</sup> and falter not, for there is no better thing for a warrior than to wage righteous war.

<sup>2</sup> "And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehendeth it not." *John 1, V.*

<sup>3</sup> Dharma, literally that to which one clings; i.e., Duty, Religion. Dharma should sometimes be understood to mean *métier*. See Introduction.

II. 32

Fortunate indeed are the soldiers, Arjuna, who, fighting in such a battle, reach this unsought, open gate to heaven.

II. 33

But to refuse this just fight and forego thine own duty <sup>4</sup> and honour, is to incur sin.

II. 34

By so doing the world will also hold thee ever in despite. To the honourable, dishonour is surely worse than death.

II. 35

The great charioteer warriors will believe that through fear thou hast withdrawn from the battle. Then shalt thou fall from their esteem, who hast hitherto been highly regarded.

II. 36

Thine enemies moreover, cavilling at thy great prowess, will say of thee that which is not to be

<sup>4</sup> Here Dharma is really *métier*. A soldier's *métier* is to fight. He should see to it that he is fighting for a righteous cause.

uttered. What fate, indeed, could be more unbearable than this?

## II. 37

Dying thou gainest heaven; victorious, thou enjoyest the earth. Therefore, Arjuna, arise, resolved to do battle.

## II. 38

Look upon pain and pleasure, gain and loss, conquest and defeat, as the same, and prepare to fight; thus shalt thou incur no evil.

## II. 39

Now hath been declared unto thee the understanding of the Self. Harken thou moreover to the Way,<sup>5</sup> following which, O son of Kings, thou shalt break through the fateful bondage of thine act.<sup>6</sup>

## II. 40

On this Way nothing that is begun is lost, nor are there any obstacles, and even a very little progress thereon bringeth security against great fear.

<sup>5</sup> Yoga. The exact meaning of Yoga depends on its context. It signifies any consistent way of spiritual life. See note, Chap. III, V. 10.

<sup>6</sup> "The bondage of thine act," Karma. "The doctrine of true knowledge and of emancipation by means of it." (Telang, note [1] p. 47.) Deeds, hence duty, hence fate (but not "fatalism").



## II. 41

This Way is the path of single mind, for the ways of the many-minded man are manifold and devious.

## II. 42, 43, 44

The single mind is not to them who are deeply attached to pleasure and profit, whose discrimination is stolen away by the flowery talk of unwise men enamoured of empty ritual, (saying that there is nothing beyond it) and full of desires, whose goal is heaven. The words of such men, no matter how exuberant, and the various religious rites, no matter how numerous, prescribed by them as a means of success in worldly affairs, lead not to liberation, Arjuna, but cause the soul to wander from birth to birth.

## II. 45

Ancient books deal with the attributes of spirit, mind and body which pertain to worldly affairs.<sup>7</sup> Freedom is to free thyself from these, Arjuna, to free thyself from the opposites of good and evil, to free thyself from power, to free thyself from having and holding, and to rest established in the Self.

<sup>7</sup> Telang, note p. 48. (2)

## II. 46

To the illumined one who hath known the Indweller, all the Sacred Books are as useless as a reservoir at the time of flood.

## II. 47

Thy task is not concerned with the fruits of thine act. Let not reward be the motive of thy deed; neither become wedded to inaction.

## II. 48

Be steadfast in devotion, Arjuna, but perform thine acts without attachment, and remain unconcerned with their success or failure. This evenness of mind leadeth to the realization of God.

## II. 49

Those who work for reward are lost, Arjuna. Acts tainted by desire are inferior to work done with a mind indifferent to result.

## II. 50

The man who maintaineth an even mind freeth himself in this life alike from vice and virtue. Therefore, acquire devotion, for thus the worker attaineth mastery, and thus also is he set free.

## II. 51

The wise man is serene, and indifferent to reward; he is forever free from the fetters of rebirth, attaining to that state which is beyond all evil.

## II. 52

When thy mind shall have overcome delusion, then shalt thou remain unmoved<sup>8</sup> by all that thou hast heard or may yet hear.

## II. 53

When thy reason is no longer tossed about by the conflict of opinions, and hath become firmly established in contemplation, then shalt thou reach unto the Self, then shalt thou attain realization!

## II. 54

Arjuna now spoke, questioning thus:

What, Kṛishṇa, are the characteristics of the man who hath thus attained serenity of spirit? Such an one, how speaketh he, how sitteth, how moveth?

<sup>8</sup> Apathy, non-attachment; i.e., the true indifference which is to ignore both good and evil.

## II. 55

And Kṛishṇa answered in these words:

When a man possesseth unshaken wisdom, he casteth away all the desires of the mind, and is satisfied in the Self. . . .

## II. 56

His heart is neither moved by adversity nor is it athirst for happiness; he hath become free from affection, fear, and wrath; he indeed is a sage who hath obtained the tranquil mind.

## II. 57

He who, free from attachment, is neither pleased with good nor vexed with evil things, his wisdom is unwavering.

## II. 58

When also, like the tortoise who withdraweth its legs under its shell, he can completely withdraw his senses from that which hath touched them, then indeed hath his wisdom become secure.

## II. 59

Enticement falleth away from the abstinent man, but not so his longing . . . . that is lost only by him who hath seen the Supreme.

## II. 60, 61

The boisterous senses, Arjuna, snatch violently at the mind even of a wise man striving after perfection; let him curb them, let him put his trust in Me; for steady is His wisdom whose senses are thus quelled.

## II. 62

The thought of a thing createth attachment to it; from this attachment is born longing, and from longing, intense passion.

## II. 63

Passion createth delusion, and by delusion the continuity of the mind is interrupted; from this interruption cometh about ruin of the mind's discrimination; and from this ruin doth a man perish.

## II. 64

But he who is self-controlled, moving through the world with senses under restraint, freed from the opposites of attraction and aversion, he indeed attaineth tranquillity.

## II. 65

In this Peace all sorrow is destroyed, for his reason, whose heart is thus tranquil, is soon established in security.

## II. 66

The man of unstable mind hath no knowledge of the Self, nor hath he the insight of meditation. To him who hath no inner vision there is no peace, and without peace, whence cometh joy?

## II. 67

For the heart, following in the wake of the wandering senses, beareth away discrimination as a wind carrieth away a boat upon the waters.

## II. 68

Therefore, thou Mighty-armed One, know that he whose knowledge is stable is he whose senses are quelled.

## II. 69

In the night wherein are most men lost, the self-controlled one findeth himself. When others wake, that is night to him who is Self-enlightened.

## II. 70

As into the changeless ocean flow many-colored rivers to be lost beneath its emerald level, so doth experience enter the life of the spiritually minded man, disturbing not the content of his peace.

## II. 71

He who liveth devoid of longing, abandoning all desire, saying not to himself, this is 'I' and that is 'mine,' he attaineth tranquillity.

## II. 72

This state, Arjuna, is verily to have being in the Supreme God. None having attained to this suffereth delusion, and to be established therein at the end of life is to reach everlasting and absolute bliss.

*The end of the Second Chapter, designated*

THE WAY OF KNOWLEDGE

## THIRD CHAPTER

### III. 1

Now Arjuna said:

Kṛishṇa, if knowledge be deemed by Thee better than works, why then urge me to this fearful deed?

### III. 2

Thy words appear to me equivocal and bewilder my understanding; make clear to me therefore the one way by which I may with certainty attain the Highest Good.

### III. 3

Kṛishṇa replied:

In the beginning of creation, Sinless One, a twofold path of Realization was given by Me to this world; one branch thereof for those disposed to meditation, is the Path of Knowledge; the other, for those of active disposition, is the Way of Deeds.



### III. 4

Yet neither by abstaining from action, doth man attain tranquillity, nor by renunciation alone reacheth he to perfection.

### III. 5

For, in truth, nature itself constraineth all creatures to activity, and none even for an instant may remain wholly without action.

### III. 6

A man who assumeth the attitude of meditation the while within his mind he broodeth upon sensuous images, is of darkened insight, and justly named hypocrite, since by his gestures, he belieth his thought.

### III. 7

But he who hath obtained dominion over his senses by the discrimination of his mind and with devotion dedicateth all his acts to Me, that man, Arjuna, excelleth in realization.

### III. 8

Perform, therefore, all prescribed deeds by this means, for to do is better than not to do, and without

activity thou mayest not maintain even the bare maintenance of thy body.

### III. 9

But to aimless activity is the world in bondage; therefore, do thou Arjuna, consecrate <sup>1</sup> all thine acts to the Realization of God.

### III. 10

In the beginning the Creator made at the same time man and his need of consecration, saying: "By sacrifice shalt thou multiply, and sacrifice shall be the milch cow of all thy desire.

<sup>1</sup>Yajña: religious rite, sacrifice, worship, consecration; the sacrifice involved in Yoga. (Yoga literally means to join—a yoke; hence, the means of attaining realization of God, the renunciation or devotion necessary to "yoke" the finite to the infinite.) To reach God through the Yoga of knowledge, ignorance is sacrificed; through the Yoga of deeds, the results or rewards must be abandoned; through the Yoga of love, dislike and repulsion are given up. The word Yajña has thus the meaning of consecration, sacrificial devotion or sacrament.

The primitive meaning of the word, however, from which these meanings are derived, and the sense in which it is used in the following verses, is the mystic act by which life is remade. It is not sacrifice in the Jewish and Christian sense of purification or propitiation; it is the mystic "becoming" and change of form as exemplified in the Balder and Persephone legends that had their origin in still older myths.

### III. 11

“Cherish the gods with thine oblations, and the gods will cherish thee; thus bound in complete comradeship with the immortals, shalt thou attain the highest good.

### III. 12

“For pleased with the offering of thy toil the gods will give thee thy desire, but he who enjoyeth the gifts of the gods without making due sacrifice of his labor in return, is verily a thief.”

### III. 13

Good men, by means of the ordained sacrifices free themselves from sin<sup>2</sup>, and in the performance of all rites and rituals, distill the spirituality by which they live. But the sustenance of those who are incapable of devotion is solitariness and delusion.

### III. 14

As being cometh forth from seed, as rain maketh the seed to spring up, as sacrifice bringeth the rain from heaven, and as sacrifice is born from the acts of men,

<sup>2</sup> The Sanskrit word for sin also means unreality, and error.

### III. 15

So is action sanctified, and thus dwelleth ever in the sacrament, Brahma, the Imperishable.

### III. 16

In this way hath the Creator set the procession of life to revolve about the altar of fire: he who followeth not this moving circle liveth in error, indulging his senses. All such living, Arjuna, is in vain!

### III. 17

But he who is Self-devoted because self-wrought, Self-satisfied because self-lost, content with self by means of the Self, such a man as he hath no duty left to perform.

### III. 18

He hath naught to gain in this world through his own effort, naught to lose by the omission of any act, no need to hang upon another for the attainment of any end at all.

### III. 19

Therefore, perform thine allotted task without attachment, and by this means thou shalt attain to the Supreme.

### III. 20

By work the great attained bliss.

All men are bound together by their deeds. This is the law of life; thou also must perform thy task.

### III. 21

Whatsoever the superior person doeth, others also do, what he setteth forth by his behavior, that, all men follow. He then who leadeth the excellent life giveth by his deeds example to those about him. By acts alone, excellence is demonstrated to others.

### III. 22

And I, Arjuna, even I who am God, who have no duty, naught that is unattained, naught to gain in all the three worlds; yet I too may never interrupt Mine effort.

### III. 23

For were I to cease My unrelaxing activity, the whole human race, O Descendant of Kings, would imitate My example.

### III. 24

If I desist, these worlds perish. No man would know himself or his task; confusion would come to all and ruin follow.

### III. 25

The wise should perform tasks without attachment, yet with as much ardor as the foolish who are bound up in the results of their deeds—thus to the world shall they set example.

### III. 26

But the minds of ignorant men yoked to action should not be disturbed by the wise man; they may be enlightened by him if he, as steadfast in his work as they, is yet able, unlike them, to keep himself unattached.

### III. 27

Every man putteth forth energy by reason of his own nature; the eternal qualities<sup>3</sup> of his being go forth to create; yet the man of deluded understanding blinded by egoism sayeth: "I alone am the doer."

### III. 28

Mighty-armed Arjuna, he who understandeth that his soul is apart from the forces of nature and that the qualities inherent in his being by the tentacles of his senses seek for objects of attachment, is freed by knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> Guṇas—see Chap. XIII, note to verse 14.

### III. 29

Those who are deluded by the force of nature, attach themselves to their delusions. Yet a man who knoweth perfection doth not unsettle the mind of him who is darkened by his own tendencies.

### III. 30

By consecrating all his acts to Me and with his mind centered on My Eternal essence, is man untrapped by self-pity and freed from the fever of the mind.

### III. 31

The consecrated souls who constantly practise this teaching of Mine are liberated from attachment to their acts.

### III. 32

But the slaves of habit who ignore it are deluded in all knowledge, and devoid of discrimination; they indeed are ruined.

### III. 33

Even a wise man abideth by his disposition; all things that live act in accordance with their nature, and it availeth them naught to violate this law.

### III. 34

Though the senses, swayed by their aversions and attractions, bend a man's nature this way or that, let none succumb to their dominion, for they are the enemies within the stronghold.

### III. 35

Better is one's own Path,<sup>4</sup> though imperfect, than the Path of another well-made. Better is death in one's own Way,<sup>4</sup> for the Way of another is fraught with fear.

### III. 36

Now Arjuna asked:

But what is it that impelleth a man to commit sin as though constrained, Kṛishṇa, by force, and against his own wishes?

### III. 37

The Blessed One replied:

It is desire—it is anger, born of the quality which clamoreth for power, born of great craving, and of dark ignorance, the foe of men.

<sup>4</sup> Dharma, in the original, has here been translated by both Path and Way (*See* note, Book II, V. 31)—it is the path of religion or of the special duty of each soul.



### III. 38

As a fire is enveloped by smoke, as a mirror by dust, as an embryo by the womb, so is Self-knowledge concealed by desire.

### III. 39

Its insatiable flames are the constant foe of the wise, Arjuna.

### III. 40

The senses that perceive, the mind that broodeth, and the understanding that determineth, are said to be the abode of this fire, and by enflaming them it deludeth a man and veileth his wisdom.

### III. 41

Therefore, O Bull amongst men, control thy senses at the outset, kill desire, the sinful thing, the destroyer of knowledge, the destroyer of Realization.

### III. 42

It hath been said: Great are the senses; greater than the senses is the intellect; greater than intellect is the understanding; but the greatest of all is the Soul <sup>5</sup> which is eternal.

<sup>5</sup> Ātman, the Self.

### III. 43

Thus, knowing that which is higher than understanding, quell thyself by The Self and destroy thine enemy, O Mighty-armed one, destroy desire, the foe that eludeth every hold!

*The end of the Third Chapter, designated*

THE WAY OF ACTION

## FOURTH CHAPTER

### IV. 1

The Blessed One continued, speaking as follows:

I have told this imperishable Way <sup>1</sup> of self-realization by deeds to Vivasvat, the Sun; I have told it to Manu <sup>2</sup> and Manu hath told it to Ikṣhvāku: <sup>2</sup>

### IV. 2

The royal sages knew this Yoga, thus handed down from ruler to ruler; but through long lapse of time it hath been neglected by mankind, O Scorcher of thy foes.

### IV. 3

Now today have I expounded to thee this most ancient devotion, this supreme mystery, since thou art my friend and my beloved.

<sup>1</sup> Yoga—to join, a yoke, hence the means by which God is reached; see note, Chap. III, V. 9.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient kings and heroes of India whom even the Hindus find it very difficult to identify.

#### IV. 4

Then Arjuna questioned and said:

Later is Thy birth than the sun's birth, how then hast Thou been the first to impart this thing?

#### IV. 5

The Blessed One replied:

Many are the births that have been passed by Me and thee, Arjuna. I know them all, but thou knowest them not.

#### IV. 6

Although I am unborn, and immutable, and Lord of all form, yet I control Mine own eternity, appearing and reappearing to man vested in illusion.

#### IV. 7

When virtue is decadent, when righteousness is trodden under foot, ever and again I reincarnate myself to re-establish my kingdom.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>3</sup> This is the creed of modern Hinduism. Every Hindu, whether familiar with the rest of the Gītā or not, is imbued with faith in this text. Hence, every Hindu child is taught to reverence Christ, Buddha, Kṛishṇa, and other incarnations of God.

#### IV. 8

I come into being in every age for the protection of the good, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of Religion.

#### IV. 9

Whosoever truly knoweth My divine nature and origin casteth off his body, Arjuna, nor is he born into this world again.

#### IV. 10

From passion set free, by fear unfettered, from anger released, enfolded in the thought of Me who am the nest of his desire, and purified by the discipline of knowledge, man attaineth unto Me.

#### IV. 11

At the end of each path, lo, there I await, for all ways are My ways, O Arjuna!

#### IV. 12

Men who desire worldly success worship worldly gods, for in this world the success produced by deeds is soon obtained.

#### IV. 13

I have created the division of castes assigning them to each man according to his character and tendency.<sup>4</sup> Though I am the author thereof, know Me to be inactive and immutable.

#### IV. 14

Actions defile Me not, nor have I any thirst for their results. He who knoweth Me thus, is unfettered by acts.

#### IV. 15

Armed with this knowledge, the ancient seekers after freedom performed their allotted tasks. Do thou, therefore, perform thine, as did the ancients in olden time.

#### IV. 16

But since even the sages are bewildered and know not what is action and what is inaction, I will make plain to thee this knowledge by which thou shalt be freed from evil.

<sup>4</sup> Caste is inherited; tendency is brought by the soul from previous incarnations.

#### IV. 17

For the nature of action and inaction and forbidden action must be distinguished clearly, since well-nigh inscrutable is the fate that hideth in all the deeds of men.

#### IV. 18

He who is in repose in the midst of activity and active in the midst of repose is master craftsman of Realization through his works.

#### IV. 19

Him the Sages call wise whose undertakings are devoid of all cunning and desire for reward, and whose acts are tested in the fire of knowledge.

#### IV. 20

Without desire for the fruit of his deeds, at peace, independent of aid from without; such a man is truly inactive though engaged in many works.

#### IV. 21

Unhoodwinked by hope, untrammelled by possessions, and with mind and senses controlled, his deeds in this world produce no evil.

#### IV. 22

His wish hath no goal, though he is content to strive; he is untouched by the opposition of good and evil, unbound by envy, tranquil alike in success or failure; such an one as he is indeed the master of his acts—he, verily, he is free!

#### IV. 23

Unattached, liberated, centered in wisdom, toiling only to realize the indwelling Self, all the debts of his previous existences are wiped out.

#### IV. 24

God is his oblation; God his ritual; his travail God! The fire that consumeth him is God, because he hath become one with God.<sup>5</sup>

#### IV. 25

There are many who make their oblations to the gods, while others severing their own bonds cast the transitory self into the altar fire of the Eternal Brahman.

#### IV. 26

Some offer up their senses in the fire of self-restraint; others cast all that they feel and know upon the altar of that sacrifice.

<sup>5</sup> This is the grace used by many Hindus at their meals.



#### IV. 27

Some again offer up all the objects of the senses and the functions of vital energy as sacrifice in the wisdom-kindled fire of self-control. Others, quickened by knowledge, sacrifice their worldly power and their spiritual energy in the flames of Self-realization.

#### IV. 28

Others sacrifice wealth, austerity, and their spiritual inheritance from the past, while still others, men of self-restraint and rigid vows, sacrifice their scholar's learning and their wisdom.

#### IV. 29, 30, 31, 32

Some consecrate even their very breath to God, regulating its ingoing and its outgoing, while others master their vital forces, and give up food and all the functions of their body. All of these are indeed knowers of the power of sacrifice, their sins are burned away and, as at the end of a sacrifice, the remains are partaken by all the devotees, so they at last partake with God of their own offering.

This world is not for those who would forego sacrifice, Arjuna. Various are the forms thereof recounted in the Vedas, and every one is consummated by an act. Know this, for it shall release thee from bondage.

#### IV. 33

The consecration of knowledge is superior, O Scorcher of thy foes, to that of wealth, for all action attaineth its fulfillment in understanding.

#### IV. 34

By prostrating thyself before wise men, by questioning them, by rendering them thy service, thou shalt receive instruction in this knowledge.

#### IV. 35

Then never again shalt thou be deluded, Arjuna, for thou shalt see all existence in thyself and in Me.

#### IV. 36

On the raft of this knowledge, even the most sinful may traverse sin.

#### IV. 37

For as blazing fire consumeth wood, so, Arjuna, doth the fire of knowledge burn to ashes all the fatality<sup>6</sup> of past actions.

<sup>6</sup> Karma.

#### IV. 38

Verily, there is no purification in this world equal to understanding. In good time, perfected by devotion, thou mayest perceive this truth within thine own heart.

#### IV. 39

The consecrated one, the devoted one, the master of his own senses, attaineth this knowledge. Having conquered it, he entereth into the Peace that is beyond description.<sup>7</sup>

#### IV. 40

The ignorant, the unconsecrated, the self-doubter, goeth to nothingness: <sup>8</sup> for he who doubteth himself, doubteth this world, the other world, and all his own happiness.

#### IV. 41

Actions fetter not him who possesseth himself, who forsaketh reward and by wisdom cutteth the bonds of his misgiving.

<sup>7</sup> Nirvāṇa.

<sup>8</sup> The opposite of Nirvāṇa.

#### IV. 42

Therefore, sever with the blade of insight this doubt  
born of the ignorance residing in thine own heart;  
engage in this devotion, Arjuna, arise, and fight!

*The end of the Fourth Chapter, designated*

THE WAY OF DETACHMENT FROM ACTION  
BY KNOWLEDGE

## FIFTH CHAPTER

### V. 1

Then said Arjuna:

Thou extolleth, Kṛishṇa, the renunciation of the active life, and yet again, Thou awardest great merit to doing of deeds. Make clear to me which of these two ways is better.

### V. 2

The Blessed One replied:

Devotion, both by means of the active and the inactive life, leadeth to freedom, but the active life is superior to passivity.

### V. 3

When a man knoweth neither aversion nor desire, he is in truth an ascetic,<sup>1</sup> Arjuna; he is free from the opposition of good and evil, and free also from bondage.

<sup>1</sup> Sannyāsī, a holy man, one who, like Socrates, lives in the world but practises detachment from it; literally, an apathist, in the Greek sense. The Hindu idea is here difficult to convey as it is foreign and almost contradictory to the Christian terms used in this connection.

## V. 4

No wise man, but only children speak of the active Way and the Way of contemplation as distinct and separate one from the other.<sup>2</sup> He who followeth to the end the way of one, gaineth the fruits of both.

## V. 5

The heights attained by contemplative men may also be reached by those who toil, and he who seeth knowledge and the right doing of deeds as one, that man is a seer.

## V. 6

Without consecrated deeds<sup>3</sup> the path of renunciation is thorny with difficulties; the devout sage, mantled in meditation, and purified by his acts, speedily attaineth God.

## V. 7

Such a man, who is pure in spirit, wedded to his task, victor of himself, his senses stilled, his heart the cradle of every thing that liveth, he, though active, is yet unsullied by his deeds.

<sup>2</sup> The opposition here is not so much between action and inaction as between the Way of Action (Karma Yoga) and the State of Inactivity for the purpose of knowledge (Sāṅkhya).

<sup>3</sup> Yoga.

## V. 8, 9

Sayeth this man, who is the knower of truth: "I of myself do nothing; seeing, I see not; hearing, I hear not; touching, I touch not; smelling, I smell not; eating, I eat not; going, I go not forth; grasping, I grasp not; sleeping, I sleep not; breathing, I breathe not; I renounce, I renounce, I renounce; for not I, but my senses only are at play with their toys like children."

## V. 10

As riseth the lotus leaf above the level of the water in which it liveth, so doth that man transcend good and evil, who performeth his allotted task in consecration to God.

## V. 11

By body, by senses, by mind, by spirit, the disciple followeth the way of active life, and performeth his tasks without attachment, for the purification of his heart.

## V. 12

The well-poised man of single mind is steadfastly indifferent to the results of his acts and attaineth peace; but he who is insecure and deluded by desire is imprisoned in his own attachment.

### V. 13

The victor of himself, detached, discriminating, dwelleth happily in the citadel of his body, causing no act that doeth violence either to his own or to another's spirit.

### V. 14

The Master of the universe hath fashioned neither actor nor act to join the deed to its result; by appearances <sup>4</sup> alone are all men thus deluded.

### V. 15

The Omnipresent Lord regardeth not merit nor demerit, nor do men suffer because of sin, but because their knowledge is veiled with ignorance.

### V. 16

But ignorance is destroyed by the knowledge of Self, whose sun-like radiance revealeth the Supreme.

### V. 17

And those whose intellect is centered upon the Supreme, whose self is That, whose steadfastness is in

<sup>4</sup> Nature. God is our conception of the absolute, and since the human mind is unable to conceive anything to exist outside time and space, cause and effect, we have attributed to our conception of the absolute, this frame of our thinking which we call "nature."



That, whose consummation is That, are cleansed of all their impurities by knowledge, and go hence never to return.

V. 18

The knower of the Self looketh with equal eye upon the priest endowed with learning and humility, the cow, the elephant, the dog, or the pariah.

V. 19

These men who have attained equilibrium have mastered all existences, like God Himself.

V. 20

At rest in God, with unshaken mind, they rejoice not at the gift of pleasure nor grieve at that of pain.

V. 21

With soul apathetic to the world without, it is possible to experience the mind's bliss in Divine meditation, and to attain undying happiness.

V. 22

Pleasures that blossom from the world at the touch of man's senses, give birth only to sorrow, Arjuna, for

they bloom but to die, and a wise man rejoiceth not in them.

V. 23

And if before his liberation from the body he is able to withstand in this world the onslaughts of his own anger and lust, he attaineth steadfast happiness.

V. 24

Whose joy is within, whose rest is within, whose light is within, that disciple, himself becoming God, gaineth absolute freedom.

V. 25

His imperfections have perished, his doubts are dispelled, his senses are controlled, he is intent upon the welfare of all beings, he obtaineth absolute freedom.

V. 26

With release from lust and anger, with control of heart, with realization of Self, the holy one, both here and hereafter knoweth absolute freedom.

V. 27, 28

The sage who hath shut from his mind external things and remaineth detached, with eyes steady be-

tween the brows, breathing evenly, senses, mind, and insight harmonious, desires, fears and anger forever forgotten, with liberation as his supreme goal, that man of meditation hath verily won absolute bliss.<sup>5</sup>

## V. 29

He indeed knoweth Me as the Deviser of many forms of God-realization and the Great Lord of all worlds, the Friend of all beings; and he attaineth to Peace!

### *The end of the Fifth Chapter, designated*

#### THE WAY OF DETACHMENT FROM THE FRUIT OF DEEDS

<sup>5</sup> If the reader wishes to learn the many implications of the word Nirvāṇa he will find them in this and the four preceding stanzas, which show that the Hindus used the word to signify freedom and absolute bliss. See Telang, p. 66, note 4.

## SIXTH CHAPTER

### VI. 1

The Blessed One now spoke these words, saying:

Who taketh no thought for the reward of his task, yet performeth it to the end, he, verily, hath both won and foregone the active life; not so that man by whom the altar is neglected and the offering forgotten.

### VI. 2

Know thou that what is called renunciation, O Royal Prince, is in truth the practice of devotion: it is to abjure the scene-maker, the mind, and to ignore the imagination's shifting, desire-inciting pictures.

### VI. 3

The man of contemplation guideth himself by the discipline of his deeds; when his heart is thus purified, he needeth no more to act; his way is the way of Peace!

## VI. 4

Verily, a man acquireth detachment when the Scene-maker hath ceased to present to him the drama of deeds and their results: then, truly, hath he attained concentration.

## VI. 5

Since man's own self drags him down let every man by himself lift himself up, that the self may be his friend and not his enemy.

## VI. 6

For the man who hath conquered self maketh self his friend, but he who is not the victor of himself hath self for constant foe.

## VI. 7

Such a man of controlled and quiet mind beholdeth constantly before him, in cold and heat, pleasure and pain, in honour as in dishonour, his Eternal Self.

## VI. 8

His self is stilled in knowledge and experience; his senses are obedient, and as an anvil, he remaineth unmoved alike to the impact of gold or stone or clay.

## VI. 9

He who hath attained excellence shall contemplate with equanimity the righteous and the unrighteous, the hateful and the friendly, partisans and non-partisans, opponents and brothers.

## VI. 10

The Seeker continually augmenteth his consecration to the eternal Self by retirement into solitude, by alone-ness, by control of mind and body, by refusing admission to the delusions of hope, and by freeing himself from the instincts of ownership.

## VI. 11

He findeth a secret place in which to cleanse his heart: dry, neither high nor low; his seat is firm; it is made of Kusha grass, and is covered with an antelope skin, over which is a linen cloth.<sup>1</sup>

## VI. 12

And there seated, with mind one-pointed, imagination and senses obedient, the Seeker endeavoreth to purify his heart.

<sup>1</sup> These are the requirements in India for the practice of Yoga.

## VI. 13

Let him hold his body erect and motionless, his head high, his neck firm, and eyes fixed on the tip of the nose; let him keep his gaze from wandering about.

## VI. 14

And with heart serene and fearless, firm in the vow of holiness, his mind controlled and fixed upon Me, he should sit thus in meditation, all his thoughts lost in the immensity of My Being.

## VI. 15

Thus with steadfast soul and ever-pointed mind attaineth he My unutterable peace.<sup>2</sup>

## VI. 16

But not for him, Arjuna, who is extreme in doing, who eateth in excess or who eateth too little, not for him who sleepeth over much or not enough, is the attainment of My quest.

## VI. 17

It is to him who is temperate in eating, in recreation, in effort, in sleep, in wakefulness, that this quest becometh the destroyer of misery.

<sup>2</sup> Nirvāṇa. Wilkins translates the word in this stanza, "happiness incorporeal and supreme in Me." "Peace that passeth understanding."

## VI. 18

When the mind of such an one is perfectly attuned, freed from longing and desire, then resteth he serenely in Me.

## VI. 19

And as a candle flame in a windless place flickereth not, so burneth the mind of that man whose quest is the Self.

## VI. 20

His thought is quiescent and stilled by the practice of Devotion; <sup>3</sup> he attaineth fathomless repose. He seeth within himself the Self of all things and is satisfied.

## VI. 21

Beyond the reach of the senses is that exceeding great joy which through understanding he hath now found. His mind is fastened upon infinitude, and he is established securely and forever.

## VI. 22

Attaining this state the seeker swerveth not from the truth; acquiring it, no other state is desirable to him; adhering to it, he is unshaken by great sorrow.

<sup>3</sup> Yoga.



## VI. 23

By this Devotion <sup>4</sup> is won supreme release from pain. Let the disciple practice it with steadfast and unflinching heart.

## VI. 24

Moreover, let him look not upon the pictures of his imagination; let him disregard the drama of his unquiet senses.

## VI. 25

And so with intellect set in patience as a gem is set in gold, by slow degrees, as his thoughts are released from attachment to material things, he shall attain tranquillity.

## VI. 26

Whatever the cause whereby the restless, unsteady mind wandereth, let the Seeker curb it and bring it to subjugation by the everlasting Self.

## VI. 27

For verily, supreme bliss cometh to him whose mind is an immense ocean of tranquillity, where passions are calmed, which containeth God and is contained in God.

<sup>4</sup> Yoga.

VI. 28

Thus his soul is freed from thought of good and evil, thus he tasteth God's infinite bliss.

VI. 29

His heart is set upon God, and he beholdeth all beings in himself and himself in all beings.

VI. 30

Him, who thus knoweth Me in all things and seeth all in Me, I forsake not, nor forsaketh he Me forever.

VI. 31

Who worshipeth My presence in all things and seeth all things as one, whatsoever his mode of life, that man liveth in Me.

VI. 32

He who knoweth the pleasure and the pain of others as the same which he himself hath felt, such an one, Arjuna, hath attained the supreme height.

VI. 33

Now questioned Arjuna, saying to the divine Kṛishṇa:

How can the ever-restless human mind attain that

equanimity of sustained devotion which Thou hast set forth?

VI. 34

For verily, Kṛishṇa, the mind of man appeareth to me fickle, turbulent, wayward, unyielding, and as impossible to restrain as the wind!

VI. 35

The Blessed One replied:

Without doubt, is the mind wayward and difficult to restrain, Arjuna, but through practice and detachment, it may yet be controlled.

VI. 36

The habit of Devotion <sup>5</sup> necessary to this task is hard to acquire by an ungoverned mind, but he who hath won self-command, striving by right means, may indeed attain it.

VI. 37

But Arjuna questioned again, saying:

What befalleth the man who though possessed of faith is yet unable to guide the habit of his mind; <sup>6</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Yoga.

<sup>6</sup> Yoga in this verse is used in its ordinary sense of practice or method.

who is infirm in action, though full of devotion, O Kṛishṇa?

VI. 38

Falleth he not like a cloud from heaven into the abyss? For what path remaineth for him, Kṛishṇa, who hath failed in both ways to God?

VI. 39

Tear asunder this doubt of mine, O Kṛishṇa, for Thou alone canst end uncertainty.

VI. 40

The Blessed One replied in these words:

Verily, Arjuna, there is no destruction for him whom thou hast described, here or hereafter, for the lover of good, my son, is never lost.

VI. 41

For, if having attained righteousness, he yet faileth in religious Discipline,<sup>7</sup> he is reborn in the home of the beautiful and good, the radiant and pure.

<sup>7</sup> Yoga.

VI. 42

Or he is born into a family of holy and illustrious men, a rare birth indeed.

VI. 43

There he retaineth the insight acquired in his former life, Arjuna, and hence striveth anew for the attainment of perfection.

VI. 44

By that former effort, he is carried toward his goal. For the power that impelleth him is greater than the power of ritual, and superior to ancient words.

VI. 45

Thus the Seeker, striving assiduously, purified of taint, gaining slow perfection through many births, reacheth at last the highest goal.

VI. 46

He excelleth those who practice asceticism, and those who have obtained the wisdom of books. He is superior to the doer of deeds, and to those who perform

only the injunctions of Holy Writ.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, set forth, Arjuna, upon this quest.

## VI. 47

For the Seeker inspired by devotion and absorbed in Me, persistent in effort to reveal Me unto his very self, he of all men should be considered the most secure.

*The end of the Sixth Chapter, designated*

THE WAY OF MEDITATION

<sup>8</sup> The Gītā considers itself, in this sense, outside of prescribed religion; its stress is upon man's need to find God through his own endeavor and the method of his own devising.

## SEVENTH CHAPTER

### VII. 1

The Blessed One said:

Listen now, Arjuna, and hear how thou mayest comprehend Me by the practice of Devotion, and, grafting thy mind upon Me, find in Me thy stronghold, and in Me thy dedication.

### VII. 2

For I will speak to thee of that knowledge bound to experience, which, having been mastered, no other is worthy to be known.

### VII. 3

Among many thousand men, only a few strive to reach perfection; and from among these blessed, only one perchance, thus striving, may know Me in My reality.

## VII. 4

The nature of My appearance is divided eightfold: <sup>1</sup> earth, water, fire, air, space, thought, reason, and the consciousness of self, thus is It manifest.

## VII. 5

But this is the lower aspect of My nature. For understand, O thou Mighty-armèd One, that I have another Form beyond this, the very life by which this universe is created and sustained.

## VII. 6

Know that all being is the offspring of My double essence, which is the Mother and the Father of creation. Lo, I am the origin and the dissolution of the universe.

## VII. 7

Naught is there higher than Myself, Arjuna; the steepest and the smallest are included in Me; I am the golden thread on which all existences are strung like pearls.

## VII. 8

I am the taste in water, Arjuna, I am light in the sun and the moon, the sanctity in holy books, the

<sup>1</sup> Sāṅkhya philosophy.



sound losing itself in the silence of the sky, the humanity of Man—all these I am.

VII. 9

I am the fragrant smell of the earth, the brilliance in fire, the life in all that lives, and I am the flame that burneth up My devotees.

VII. 10

The eternal seed of all life, know it to be Me, Arjuna. The heroism of the brave, that also am I. Of the intelligent, I am the sword-thrust of their intellect; and of the illustrious, I am their glory.

VII. 11

Of the strong I am the weapon, unruined by anger and unblunted by desire. O Bull amongst men, I am the urge in each man according to his nature.

VII. 12

Whatever pertaineth to virtue, and that also which deriveth from passion and darkness, know them all to proceed from Me alone: I am not in them, but they are in Me.

VII. 13

Deluded by My appearances,<sup>2</sup> Arjuna, Me, The Immutable, The Everlasting, this changing world knoweth not.

VII. 14

For verily, My qualities, clothing all the aspects of life, are a divine disguise and difficult to penetrate. Those who seek Me only shall pass through this delusion to find Me.

VII. 15

But the evildoers, the ignorant, the lowest of men, deluded by appearance, deprived of discrimination and following the way of cruelty and bestiality, shall not come to Me.

VII. 16

There are four kinds of good men who desire Me, Arjuna: he who sorroweth, he who seeketh knowledge, he who desireth power, and he who hath wisdom.

<sup>2</sup> The appearance of green in a leaf which is its *quality* of greenness may so engross the student that he fails to apprehend its complete nature. (See notes: Chap. XIII verses 14 and 19.)

VII. 17

Of these, the wise man, ever steadfast, and fired by a single purpose, excelleth; supremely dear am I to the wise, and the wise are dear unto Me.

VII. 18

Noble indeed are they all, but the wise man I regard as my very Self, for Me only hath he steadfastly chosen as his supreme attainment.

VII. 19

At the end of many births, the man of wisdom cometh into Me, knowing that I am That which is the heart of all creation. Very rare is a soul thus great.

VII. 20

Others, forgetting their true nature, deprived of discrimination by this and that desire, following this or that ritual, devote themselves to various gods.

VII. 21

But whatever the form a devotee, impelled by faith, deviseth for his worship, I, God, fortify him in that faith.

## VII. 22

And, if imbued by that faith, he abideth by the form of his own worship, he attaineth from it the fulfillment which I alone dispense.

## VII. 23

Yet the fruit accruing to the men of small understanding is perishable. The worshippers of the gods go to the gods. My devotees come unto Me.

## VII. 24

The undiscerning who are not able to perceive My immutable and transcendental essence, identify Me with My myriad manifestations.

## VII. 25

Veiled in the magic of My illusion, I am not visible to all. Thus, the deluded world comprehendeth Me not, Who am the birthless One, untouched by change.

## VII. 26

I know all that hath been, Arjuna, all that is, all that is yet to be, but I am known to no man.

VII. 27

By the delusions of pleasure and pain, good and evil, arising from desire and aversion, all beings are caught on the wheel of birth and death.

VII. 28

Hence men of virtuous deeds, who are without sin and freed from these warring delusions, worship Me with steadfast faith.

VII. 29

Those who would free themselves from decay and death find their refuge in Me, for behold, I am Reality, lo, I am Release.

VII. 30

And those who recognize Me in the Earth and in Heaven, and within the sacrificial fire, their minds yoked steadfast in abstraction, realize Me at the time of death.<sup>8</sup>

*The end of the Seventh Chapter, designated*

THE WAY OF REALIZATION BY DISCERNMENT

<sup>8</sup> See next chapter.

## EIGHTH CHAPTER

### VIII. 1, 2

Arjuna now questioned the Deity again, saying:

What is Brahman, what is the soul of man and what the fate in deeds,<sup>1</sup> O Great Being? What are the dark elements of creation, and what also is Heaven? Who art Thou, immanent in the fire of sacrifice,<sup>2</sup> and how at the hour of death art Thou known unto the self-mastered?

### VIII. 3

And Kṛishṇa answered Arjuna, thus:

Brahma is the Supreme, the Imperishable Word; hidden in the soul of man, lo, It is the Indweller; and

<sup>1</sup> Karma.

<sup>2</sup> See note Chap. III, v. 9.

To understand this and the following verses, it should be remembered that sacrifice in the original sense is a mystical renewal, a rebirth and a becoming. The word is so used here, and not in the sense of expiation or propitiation.

in man's fateful acts,<sup>3</sup> behold, It is sacrifice, and the becoming of all things.<sup>4</sup>

### VIII. 4

The dark elements of Earth are perishable, O Arjuna, best of souls incarnate, and are born but to die: Heaven is My soul, the mother of all forms, and, as Kṛishṇa, I am that power ever present in the offering, that deity in every act<sup>5</sup> of birth and death, and in the coming to be of all life through the mystic rite of sacrifice.

### VIII. 5

And he whose mind in death is centered upon Me alone, leaveth the body and goeth forth to attain Me. Of this there is no doubt.

### VIII. 6

For what the mind hath clung to, that shall dominate the hour of death, and to that is directed the spirit upon the instant of its release, Arjuna.

<sup>3</sup> Karma.

<sup>4</sup> To explain this verse further and the following by a metaphor, it may be said that the Absolute Brahma is sap still in the ground; in the tree of man it becomes the Indweller that, in order to return to Itself, puts forth in acts buds and fruit in the recurring cycles of birth and death.

<sup>5</sup> Karma.

### VIII. 7

If in all places and at all times, therefore, thou shalt constantly make Me the mark of thy mind and offer all the conceptions of thine intellect to Me, thou canst not then fail, Arjuna, to reach Me.

### VIII. 8

With the mind lost to all else, with thy character formed by habit of meditation, and thy heart centered in the Supreme Being, to Him thou shalt certainly attain.

### VIII. 9, 10

As the Omniscient, the Ancient One, the Over Lord, yet more minute than the minutest atom, sustainer of all things, of form inconceivable; steeper than darkness; like the sun luminous with his own splendor; thus shalt the soul by steadfast devotion hold the conception of My being within the unstable mind, and pierce hawk-like beyond death, into My transcendent radiance.

### VIII. 11

Now will I briefly speak to thee concerning that which the knowers of the sacred writings describe as



imperishable; which the sages, self-controlled and freed from attachment, enter into, and for which they live the life of asceticism.

#### VIII. 12, 13

The seeker, closing his doors, focusing his mind upon the essence of all being, concentrating all his living force upon the supreme concept of God, leaveth his body and reacheth the ultimate goal.

#### VIII. 14

For I am of easy access to the devotee who thinketh constantly of Me, whose thought is never diverted from Me, who remembereth Me with single mind, Arjuna.

#### VIII. 15

And thus having reached My supreme perfection, the master-seeker never again falleth back into this house of pleasure and pain, good and evil, life and death.

#### VIII. 16

All worlds, Arjuna, the worlds of the Creator and His creation, are ruled by birth and death. Above them is My world, after attaining which there is no return.

### VIII. 17

For having found Me, there is no more birth and no more death.

### VIII. 18

At the dawn of Brahma's day, the moving world is born from the unseen; at the approach of His night, it sinketh into darkness for which the definitions of man can set no limit.

### VIII. 19

The constellations of life that existed in the yesterday of Brahma, merge today without volition, Arjuna, into the unmanifest dark and arise again into form, and return again into nothingness at the break of tomorrow.

### VIII. 20

But behind these immensities of light and darkness is the unfathomed existence which riseth not nor set-teth, where the rumor of destruction reacheth not, nor the sounds and echoes of rebirth.

### VIII. 21

He whose Name is Nameless is the Supreme Goal, and this is My immutable state; having attained it, none returneth therefrom.

### VIII. 22

By arrow-pointed concentration, Arjuna, the seeker findeth Him who is the sap of the universe, the nest of life, the Supreme Silence.

### VIII. 23

I shall tell thee now, O Bull amongst men, of time's furrow which the seeker shall follow never to return. I shall speak to thee also of that circling groove which men trace and retrace without escape.

### VIII. 24

By the ritual of fire, flame, day, the bright fortnight, the six months of the Northern passage of the Sun,—by this path, the knower of God the Absolute Being, goeth unto God.<sup>6</sup>

### VIII. 25

By the ritual of smoke, of night, the dark fortnight, the six months of the Southern passage of the Sun,—by this path the seeker attaineth the lunar light and returneth to this life.

<sup>6</sup> This verse and the following contains a symbolism peculiar to ancient Hindu ritual and mythology. *See* Introduction.

### VIII. 26

Truly are these bright and dark paths of the world eternal: one leadeth to liberation and the other to return.

### VIII. 27

The seeker who knoweth these two paths is never thereafter deluded. Therefore, Arjuna, devote thyself to thine own choice.

### VIII. 28

From the sacred books, from the offering of sacrifices, from the practice of austerities, from the making of gifts, accrue the merits that enrich the soul of him who seeketh; but the undeluded one, perceiving all these things, entereth into his own home.

*The end of the Eighth Chapter, designated*

THE WAY TO THE IMPERISHABLE ONE

## NINTH CHAPTER

### IX. 1

Kṛishṇa spoke again, saying:

I will now explain to thee, who probeth deeply with thy questions, that most profound intuition anchored by meditation, the understanding of which shall free thy soul.

### IX. 2

This knowledge is the King of sciences, the most royal of secrets, the most excellent of purifications; it is easy to perceive, not difficult to perform, and of imperishable quality.

### IX. 3

This science is barred to those who are without inspiration. They attain Me not, and continually retread the circle of time and birth and death.

#### IX. 4

I, the Unrevealed Form, am the essence of every changing aspect of the world. Every being abideth in Me, but I abide not in them.

#### IX. 5

Behold, I inform all form, but no form containeth Me.

#### IX. 6

As the mighty wind bloweth from sky to sky yet never exceedeth the horizons of space, so do all beings rise and move in Me without exceeding My Infinity.

#### IX. 7

All creatures go forth from Me and all return unto Me; thus rise and set my immense days and nights.

#### IX. 8

It is in the nature of my energy to manifest Myself, and to project the constellations of life that trace and retrace the furrows of time.

#### IX. 9

Although I am seated in its midst, My gaze is fixed beyond My creation:

## IX. 10

Because of Me, Nature putteth forth animate and inanimate existence, and the planets revolve in their courses because of Me.

## IX. 11

I dwell also in human form, but therein fools disregard Me, unaware of My supreme state.

## IX. 12

By vain hopes, by vain works, by vain knowledge, by vain thoughts, they are completely deluded.

## IX. 13

But the high-souled ones, Arjuna, possessed of Divine nature and knowing Me to be the origin of all beings, and immutable, worship Me with single and devoted mind.

## IX. 14

They glorify Me with songs, they adore Me with salutations, they strive after Me with painful effort and unflinching resolve, offering Me their every moment, to augment My eternity.

## IX. 15

Others sacrificing knowledge upon My altar, worship Me as separate from all, yet pervading all, as the One Light in a myriad facets.

## IX. 16

I am energy, I am realization, I am the offering of sacrifice, I am healing, I am the sacred chant, I am the oblation.<sup>1</sup>

## IX. 17

I am the supreme Progenitor, I have sired this world from My own womb as its Mother; I am the Sustenance, the sole Quest of all living beings, the Bestower of sanctity, the sacred Syllable, and the Sacred Books.

## IX. 18

I am the path and its end, I am the destination, I am destiny; I am the master and the steward; the friend, companion, refuge, abiding place am I,—the beginning and the end, the foundation of the firmament and the inexhaustible seed.

<sup>1</sup> Hindu equivalent of the Holy Communion.



IX. 19

I give heat: I withhold and send forth rain; I am immortality and I am death—being and non-being am I, Arjuna!

IX. 20

Those searchers of the Sacred Books, offering Me oblations, purifying themselves from sin and praying only to attain the realms of the gods, enjoy celestial pleasures which yet must come to end.

IX. 21

Having in the company of the gods experienced joy which seemeth lasting, but which is in truth brief, they return to the world of birth and death; blind followers of precepts, they go but to come again.<sup>2</sup>

IX. 22

But those who adore Me, and Me alone, and all beings who are steadfast and supremely dedicated in their worship, I augment in their fullness and fill them up in their emptiness.

<sup>2</sup> Compare 'the letter killeth, but the spirit giveth life.'

IX. 23

Even those who devotedly worship other gods because of their love, worship Me; but the path they follow is not My path.

IX. 24

For I alone am the Deity of all sacrifices, and those who worship other gods than Me reach the end of merit and return to the world, where they must set forth anew upon the way.

IX. 25

One pursueth the gods and attaineth the sphere of the gods suitable to the merit of his works; another worshippeth the Fathers and yet another worshippeth attributes and incarnations, each attaining unto his own place; but he who worshippeth Me cometh unto Me.

IX. 26

Whosoever with devotion offereth Me leaf, flower, fruit, or water, I accept it from him as the devout gift of the pure-minded.

IX. 27

Whatsoever thou doest, Arjuna, whatsoever thou eatest, whatsoever thou givest away, whatsoever

thou offerest up as sacrifice, and whatsoever austerity thou shalt practice, do it as an offering unto Me.

IX. 28

Thus shalt thou be released from the fateful bonds of thine acts, and the cage of good and evil. Thine heart shall renounce itself, and being liberated, shall come unto Me.

IX. 29

To Me none is hateful, none dear; but those who worship Me with devotion dwell in Me, and I also in them.

IX. 30

Even a very wicked man who worshippeth Me, eschewing all else in his devotion to Me, shall be regarded as worthy of merit, for great is his faith.

IX. 31

He shall attain righteousness in a short time, Arjuna, and compel everlasting Peace; therefore, proclaim it aloud that no one of My devotees is destroyed.

## IX. 32

They also who might be considered of inferior birth, women, tradesmen, as well as day-laborers, even they shall master this world and attain Me, Arjuna, if they seek Me with single mind.

## IX. 33

What need, then, to describe priests and kings who have attained holiness? Therefore, Arjuna, in this transient, joyless world, worship thou Me!

## IX. 34

Make thy mind My dwelling place; consecrate thyself to Me; sacrifice unto Me, bow down unto Me, make thy heart steadfast in Me thy Supreme Destination, and thou too shalt assuredly come unto Me.

*The end of the Ninth Chapter, designated*

THE WAY OF KINGLY KNOWLEDGE AND  
THE KINGLY SECRET

## TENTH CHAPTER

### X. 1

Kṛishṇa spoke, saying:

Yet again, Mighty-armèd One, listen to My excellent word, for I desire thy welfare, who art ravished by Mine utterance.

### X. 2

Not the hosts of Heaven, not the great sages, know My origin and My extent, since I am indeed the very womb from which they themselves have sprung.

### X. 3

But darkness hath been lifted from that mortal who knoweth that I am unborn, beginningless, and Supreme Master, and he hath been set free from sin.

### X. 4, 5

Diverse are the circumstances and qualities of man—enlightenment, wisdom, freedom from delusion,

mercifulness, self-restraint. To some cometh also happiness or sorrow, glory or disgrace, and birth cometh, and death, fear and also security, tranquillity and an even spirit, penance, and the giving of gifts. But know that all these conditions arise from Me alone!

#### X. 6

The seven great sages of old, and the four ancient lawgivers <sup>1</sup> were informed by My power. Verily, from My thought were they born, whence all such beings issue.

#### X. 7

He who knoweth the glory and the magnitude of these My Powers and My Emanations, becometh himself firmly established. Of this there is no doubt.

#### X. 8

I am the beginning, and to Me all things return. The wise celebrate their adoration of Me, believing that I am the source of all things, and that all things live in Me.

#### X. 9

Thinking of Me, breathing Me, perceiving Me, communicating Me one to another, proclaiming Me always, thus find they contentment and delight.

<sup>1</sup> Characters from Hindu mythology.

X. 10

For I augment those who with unfailing love adore Me, and give to them that wisdom by which they may attain Me.

X. 11

Out of my compassion for them I abide in their hearts, dispelling their darkness and ignorance by the effulgence of My wisdom.

X. 12, 13

Then said Arjuna:

Thou art the Everlasting Being, the Radiant One, the oldest God, unborn and supreme Ruler; thus declare Devala, Nārada, and Vyāsa<sup>2</sup> and so also hast thou declared thyself unto me.

X. 14

All things that thou hast said I know to be the truth, O Kṛishṇa. Verily, Lord, neither gods nor demons can encompass Thy manifestations.

X. 15

Thou alone knoweth Thine own spirit O Excellent Master, O Source of All Realities, O God of Gods, O Supreme Being.

<sup>2</sup> Ancient sages and poets of India.

X. 16

Proclaim then to me all Thy divine emanations with which Thou hast filled the Universe.

X. 17

Instruct me, Master, that I may meditate and obtain knowledge of Thee. In what symbols and aspects, O Lord, may I recognize Thee?

X. 18

Speak to me again elaborately of Thine incarnations and divine powers, O Kṛishṇa; I am insatiate of the ambrosia of Thy word!

X. 19

And Kṛishṇa assented saying:

Most excellent Prince, I shall reveal now the nature of My attributes, according to their eminence; there is no end to the immensity of My manifestation.

X. 20

I am the Self, long-haired Arjuna, existent in the heart of all beings; I am the birth, I am the life, I am the death of all things.



X. 21

I am the eldest of the Eternals, the sun among luminaries; I am the wind, I am the storm; above the stars, I am the moon, and the mind am I among the archetypes.

X. 22

Of the gods, I am the chief; in the sacred books I am the Song; above man's senses I am his intelligence, and in all living creatures I shine as their consciousness.

X. 23

Among the terrible Powers, lo, I am the God of Death and Immortality; of the monsters, I am the God of wealth; of peaks, I am the highest.

X. 24

Of the Hierophants I am the celebrant; of Generals I am the undefeated, and of many waters I am the sea.

X. 25

Among sages I am the most ancient; of words I am the single syllable 'Om';<sup>3</sup> in sacrifice I am the insistent prayer; among vast immovable ranges, I am the Himalaya.

<sup>3</sup> The sacred word in Hindu religion used to express the Supreme God.

## X. 26

Among the great trees, behold Me, the all-sheltering One; among saints, I am the favored one of God; of fairies I am the King, and the Holy Kapila <sup>4</sup> of the perfected ones.

## X. 27

Among horses know Me as that one foaled by Immortality, and of lordly elephants, the tusker of Paradise; amongst men, know Me also as King.

## X. 28

I am the thunderbolt of weapons; I am Abundance among kine; in love I am the image of life.

## X. 29

Among serpents I am the symbol of eternity. I am the circumference of the waters, the grandsire among the Fathers, and in the measurement of days, lo, I am Death.

## X. 30

Of children I am the childhood, and Time am I in numbers; of beasts, I am the lord of beasts, and among

<sup>4</sup> Kapila wrote the first Hindu Philosophy, 800 B.C., generally known as the Sāṅkhya System.

birds, I am that winged one who carrieth immortality in his beak.

X. 31

Of purification I am the wind; the great hero <sup>5</sup> am I amongst warriors; the shark amongst fishes, and of the streams, leaping from the thighs of the Himalayas, lo, I am the Ganges.

X. 32

I am the beginning and the middle and the end of appearances; amongst all sciences I am the knowledge of the Self, and I am the Truth at the end of disputation.

X. 33

Of letters I am 'A'; I am the hyphen of all compounds; I am inexhaustible Time, and the Creator whose faces look forth in all directions.

X. 34

I am all-grasping Death; I am the source of what is to be; I am the glory of woman, her fame, her grace, her memory, her insight, her constancy, and her forgiveness.

<sup>5</sup> Rāma, hero of Hindu Mythology, for whom the great epic Rāmāyaṇa was named.

X. 35

Of Songs also I am the Great Invocation; I am the metre of the hymn; I am the harvest of the month; I am Spring among the seasons.

X. 36

I am the trickery in the gambler's dice, and lo, also I am the strong man's strength! I am victory, I am effort, I am the essence of virtue in those who are virtuous.

X. 37

Of the Vṛishnis I am Vāsudeva; of the Pāṇḍavas, Dhanañjaya,<sup>6</sup> and also among the sages, I am Vyāsa, and of the discerning ones, Ushanas, the wise sage.

X. 38

I am the chastiser's rod and the cunning of the conqueror; I am the knowledge of them that know; I am the secret of secrets; I am Silence.

X. 39

Know that whatsoever is the seed of all beings, that also am I, Arjuna, and there is no being, whether moving or unmoving, that can exist apart from Me.

<sup>6</sup> Mythological gods and heroes of India.

X. 40

Neither My qualities nor My emanations have any end; I have but told a part of My divine attributions.

X. 41

Whatever glory there be, whatever magnitude, whatever power, know it to be a part of My splendor.

X. 42

But what doth it avail thee to understand all My diversity? Know only this, Arjuna: I exist and support this world by a single portion of My Being.

*The end of the Tenth Chapter, designated*

THE SPLENDOR OF THE DIVINE NATURE

## ELEVENTH CHAPTER

### XI. 1

Now Arjuna spoke, saying:

This profound and secret wisdom concerning the nature of my self's identity with Thine, which Thou from Thy compassion hast imparted to me, dispelleth my dark ignorance.

### XI. 2

O Thou lotus-eyed One, with a thousand tongues Thou hast told me of the creation and dissolution of all existence, and of Thine own immeasurable grandeur.

### XI. 3

Thou hast declared Thine infinite Self to me, O Supreme Being, yet I desire to see Thy divine form, Creator, radiant with strength, virtue and splendor.

## XI. 4

If I am able to endure this revelation, then make Thy very Self manifest to me. Show me, I implore Thee, Thine inexhaustible form!

## XI. 5

Then Kṛishṇa replied:

Now behold, Arjuna, My forms, in hundreds and thousands, various, divine, many colored and many shaped.

## XI. 6

Behold the Powers of Heaven, the Powers of the Earth, and the Powers of the Water; behold the winds, Arjuna, and look upon the charioteer of dawn, the storms and breaths of the Universe, and sights and wonders never before seen.

## XI. 7

Behold within My body the whole universe inclosed, and all its worlds of moving and moveless forms, with all else thou hast a mind to see, Arjuna!

## XI. 8

But not with mortal eyes canst thou thus behold Me. I give thee godlike sight with which to gaze

upon the outgoing and the incoming breaths of My creation.

XI. 9

Kṛishṇa, having thus spoken, revealed then to Arjuna, His very form.

XI. 10

With a thousand open mouths, with a thousand seeing eyes, vested with a thousand sights and wonders, covered with indescribable celestial ornaments and holding in a thousand hands the burning weapons of the sky, He appeareth—

XI. 11

He weareth starry garlands; He is apparelled with constellations; He is anointed with heaven-scented unguents; He containeth all wonders; He is thousand-faced; He is luminous, without limit and without end.

XI. 12

A myriad suns shining together might not be compared to the splendor of His Mighty shape.



XI. 13

Thus, in such wise saw Arjuna the many aspects of creation arranged and preordained and contained by the body of God.

XI. 14

Bewildered then with awe, his flesh creeping, his hair on end, Arjuna bowed down in salutation before God.

XI. 15

Saying:

All gods, O God, I behold in Thy divine body!  
Every creature too I see, all species and all genera,  
Brahma, the Divine Lord seated on the lotus, the saints  
and sages, the celestial serpents.

XI. 16

I behold Thee with ten thousand arms, with ten thousand bellies, with ten thousand mouths and eyes, everywhere, in endless manifestations! Without origin, without growth, without end, I behold Thee, O universal Form, O Lord of Lords!

XI. 17

I see Thee with diadem, mace, and discus, fierce  
with radiation, blinding and immeasurable, as the fire,  
as the sun.

XI. 18

Thou art the Imperishable, the Supreme, the One  
knowledge to be known in the universe; Thou art the  
inevitable encounter, the implanter of inmost truth;  
Thou art more ancient than the ancient; eternal Lord,  
and eternal Master.

XI. 19

I see Thee without beginning, middle or end, in-  
finite in power, of infinite reach; the sun and the moon  
are Thine eyes, the burning fire Thy mouth; Thou  
hast kindled the universe by Thine own flame.

XI. 20

Sky, air, earth, and all other spaces brim with  
Thine awful presence, and beholding it, the threefold  
worlds tremble with fear.

XI. 21

Verily, into Thee enter the hosts of the gods. Some  
are afraid, and with joined palms extol Thee, and saints  
and sages praise Thee with splendid hymns.

## XI. 22

Gods and heroes and titans all gaze upon Thee and are amazed.

## XI. 23

Having seen Thine immeasurable Form—with many mouths and eyes, with many arms, thighs and feet, with many bellies, and fearful with many tusks—the worlds are terrified.

## XI. 24

Thou touchest the sky and burnest in many colours, with wide open mouths, with eyes whose lightning glances sweep the universe! My heart is full of terror, my strength faileth me, and I have no peace, O Kṛishṇa!

## XI. 25

I have seen Thy visage fearful with tusks, blazing like the fires of dissolution; I have lost the four quarters of space, nor find I my compass within; have mercy, O God of gods, O Supreme Refuge of the universe!

## XI. 26, 27

Into Thy mouth, terrible with tusks and fearful to behold, are rapidly sucked down all these sons of

Dhṛitarāshṭra with hosts of monarchs, and Bhīshma, Droṇa, and Sūtaputra, the warrior chiefs. Some are caught between Thy teeth, the heads of others are crushed to dust.

XI. 28

As the many rivers obey their urge to the sea, so, in truth, do these heroes of the world of men enter Thy fiercely-flaming throat.

XI. 29

As moths and insects of the night are hurled into the blazing lamp to perish, so do these embattled multitudes rush precipitately into Thy mouth and vanish.

XI. 30

Thou swallowest all the worlds, while Thy tongue flickereth between Thy lips. Thy scorching rays burn the universe, filling it with radiance, O Kṛishṇa.

XI. 31

Explain Thyself to me, thus terrible and fierce in form! Salutation to Thee again and again, O God of gods. Have mercy upon me! I implore Thee, reveal to me Thy purpose, O Primeval One!

## XI. 32

And the Blessed One replied to Arjuna, thus:

I am irresistible, world-erasing Time, hiding in the heart of all existence. If thou, Arjuna, evade thy task, the armies arrayed before thee shall meet their inevitable end.

## XI. 33

Arise, awake and compel all glory. Humble thy foes, enjoy the fruits of thy conquest, for by Me are they already slain; therefore do thou become My cause, effecting their destruction.

## XI. 34

Lo, the generals and captains, Droṇa and Bhīshma, Jayadratha, Karṇa, have already died in Me; therefore do thou slay them in battle and fear no ill result.

## XI. 35

Arjuna, having listened to the speech of Kṛishṇa, the Wearer of the diadem, joined his palms and bowed again and again, trembling and full of awe. Then, addressing the God in a shaking voice.

XI. 36

He said:

It is meet, Kṛishṇa, that the universe delight and rejoice in Thy praise, that monsters fly in fear, and the holy ones salute Thee in adoration.

XI. 37

How should they not bow down to Thee, O great-souled One, greater even than the Creator! Master of the gods, Infinite Being, Home of the Universe, without end, Immutable! Thou art Being and Non-being—beyond either of these Thou art!

XI. 38

Thou art the first of the gods, the most ancient Person; the Destiny of this Universe; Thou art the Knower and the Known; Thou art the ultimate Finality. By Thee is the universe impregnated, O Boundless Presence!

XI. 39

Thou art the wind-god, Thou art Death, the marriage between life and immortality, the deity of fire, the sea-god, the Lord of night, Master of soils and

seasons, progenitor, ancestor of us all! Salutation, salutation to Thee, a thousand times salutation to Thee!

### XI. 40

Salutation to Thee before me; salutation to Thee behind me; salutation to Thee hemming me in on every side, Thou who art all! Infinite in power, infinite in Prowess, Infinite in reach, Thou pervadest all—Thou art all!

### XI. 41, 42

Whatever I have presumptuously said from carelessness or love, addressing Thee as, “Kṛishṇa, friend,” regarding Thee merely as a companion, this I did unconscious of Thy greatness; in whatever way I may have been disrespectful to Thee, while walking, reposing, sitting, eating, in company, or alone with Thee, I implore Thee, O immeasurable One, to forgive.

### XI. 43

Thou art the Father and Mother of the Universe, moving and unmoving; the end of all its worship; greater than the greatest—there is none to equal Thee in sea, earth or sky. There is none who can excel Thine incomparable power.

XI. 44

I am prostrated with adoration, I crave Thy forgiveness, Master most sacred and intimate. As a father forgiveth his son, as a friend a friend, as a lover his beloved, even wilt Thou forgive me, O Kṛishṇa!

XI. 45

Unseeing before, now that I have seen I am ravished; yet my mind is distracted with terror. Now reveal to me, my Master, a form which is familiar to me! Have mercy, O God of gods, Nest of the universe!

XI. 46

With crown, mace and discus<sup>1</sup> I long to see Thee as of old. Assume that same four-armed image, Thou who hast a thousand arms, who art of Infinite shapes!

XI. 47

Now Kṛishṇa replied to Arjuna, and said:

This primeval infinite essence, incarnating in many shapes, which hath not been unsealed before to any other eyes, I have graciously shown to thee through Mine own art of Self-manifestation.

<sup>1</sup> This is the common form of the Kṛishṇa icon.



XI. 48

Not by the study of the sacred rituals, nor by good works, nor by meticulous observance, nor by asceticism, is man enabled to obtain sight of My form; none hath beheld it save only thee.

XI. 49

Be not bewildered nor frightened by this vision of My terrific face. But with thy fears dispelled and mind at peace, look now again upon My familiar aspect!

XI. 50

Now Kṛishṇa, having spoken thus, assumed again His well-known shape, reassuring the terrified Arjuna.

XI. 51

And Arjuna said:

At the sight of Thy gentle human face, O Kṛishṇa, my mind is composed again and I have recovered my senses.

XI. 52

The Blessed One replied:

It is difficult indeed to see that aspect of Me which thou hast just witnessed. Even the longing gods themselves have not beheld it.

XI. 53

Neither by the scripture nor by austerities, nor by gifts, nor by self-sacrifice, am I seen as thou hast seen Me.

XI. 54

By single devotion to Me alone this form of Mine may be seen with human eyes and known and even penetrated, Arjuna.

XI. 55

For he whose habit hath been formed by labor for Me, who is bound up in Me his one goal, in love with Me only; uncompanioned, unattached, without enmity toward any man, he indeed becometh one with Me, O Royal Prince.

*The end of the Eleventh Chapter, designated*

THE VISION OF THE UNIVERSAL FORM OF GOD

## TWELFTH CHAPTER

### XII. 1

Again Arjuna questioned Kṛishṇa, saying:

Which are the better versed in Thy realization—worshippers who constantly worship Thy divine manifestation, or those who seek the Unperceived and Indestructible?

### XII. 2

And the Blessed One replied:

Whose thoughts are centered on Me and who with unswerving consecration worship Me, are best versed in devotion.

### XII. 3, 4

Those who worship the Imperishable, the Indefinable, the Unmanifested, the Omnipresent, the Unthinkable, the Unchangeable, the Immovable, the Eternal, seeking Me with even mind and conquered senses, and with love continuous like the thread of

oil that poureth unbroken from cruse into lamp; they also attain unto My very Self.

## XII. 5

Yet their travail is the greater, for the attainment of God unmanifested is a goal very difficult for the soul in human body to reach.

## XII. 6, 7

But those who adore Me, Arjuna, and resign all their actions to Me, pursuing Me as the one end, with single-hearted meditation and with mind set upon Me alone—I, their Deliverer, release them; verily I deliver them from the unresting tides of birth and death.

## XII. 8

Place then thy heart on Me; and penetrate Me with thy understanding: thus shalt thou live in Me as Myself, forever.

## XII. 9

If thy concentration weakeneth, and the arrow of thy mind falleth from its mark, then by slow degrees establish the habit of thine attention that thou mayest withdraw it from the outer world.

## XII. 10

But if this also be a meditation too difficult for thee, let all thine acts be done in My service. Even thus by thy deeds shalt thou attain perfection.

## XII. 11

If this likewise thou art unable to do, then put thy trust in thy devotion to Me, and rely not on any external thing, but with self-restraint make sacrifice to Me of the fruits of all thy deeds.

## XII. 12

Better indeed is knowledge than blind habit. Better is meditation than knowledge, but even knowledge is excelled by renunciation of the fruit of thy works, since to forego the reward is thus to obtain peace.

## XII. 13, 14

He who is without hatred toward any being, who is friendly, compassionate, selfless, oblivious of possessions, whom neither happiness nor misery disturb; forgiving, contented, firm of purpose, with mind and intelligence dedicated to Me—such an one, thus devoted, he is My beloved.

XII. 15

He who troubleth not his surroundings nor is troubled by them, who is free of fear, envy, anxiety and the influence of joy—such an one, thus devoted to Me, he is My beloved.

XII. 16

Who is beholden to none, who is purified, alert, unconcerned, untormented, released from all vain undertaking—such an one, thus devoted to Me, he is My beloved.

XII. 17

Who acclaimeth not himself, nor hateth others, who is above grief, above desire, beyond good and evil—such an one, saturated in devotion, he is My beloved.

XII. 18, 19

Serene alike with friend and foe, tranquil in honour and dishonour, unmindful of heat and cold, of pleasure and pain; faithful, yet unattached; holding in perfect balance praise and blame; silent, content, homeless yet

of a steady mind; such a man, thus devoted to Me, he is indeed My beloved.<sup>1</sup>

## XII. 20

But exceedingly dear to Me are My devotees who thirst continuously after the waters of My Immortality, and seek in Me the Unquenchable Source.

*The end of the Twelfth Chapter, designated*

THE WAY OF DEVOTION

<sup>1</sup> This type of person is called by Hindus "twice-born," and is described in the Shānti Section of the Mahābhārata referring to these verses, as follows: "He whose garment is the sky, whose home is the sky, who lieth upon the welkin and who maketh the horizon his seat, he indeed is the twice-born."

## THIRTEENTH CHAPTER

### XIII. 1

Then Arjuna said:

Of Nature and Spirit I desire to learn, O Kṛishṇa, and also what is that which is called the Field,<sup>1</sup> and who is he that garnereth it? <sup>2</sup>

And Kṛishṇa replied:

The Field, Arjuna, is this body where ripen fruits of good and evil deeds, and the Soul who knoweth well the soil and the seed and the garnered fruits, is verily the Harvester thereof.

<sup>1</sup> Kshetra—literally a field, “matter,” “the body,” wherein the harvest of action is reaped. The battle is to be waged in the field of Religion (see Chap. 1) and Kṛishṇa now explains this field, Kshetra, which may perhaps be translated as the field of Life, experience of existence.

Kshetra is sometimes compared to a mirror—the image in it, to the soul, the person looking into the mirror, the over-soul. The mirror reflects no image in the dark, and partially if the mirror is covered with dust; only when clean is the reflected image plain, but clear or obscure, the image is never to be identified with the person himself who is the Purusha or the spirit.

<sup>2</sup> This verse is omitted in many editions.



### XIII. 2

The Great Harvester am I, for every field of life is known to Me. To comprehend this twofold nature of existence is wisdom.

### XIII. 3

Therefore, the nature of the Field, of its properties, of its changes, and whence they come, and of the Harvester of experience and His powers, I now briefly declare unto thee.

### XIII. 4

This is the truth hymned by many sages in varied chants and clear-cut texts, full of reason and convincing.

### XIII. 5, 6

The Field of man's experience containeth many changing ingredients; the elements in all matter perceived and unperceived, inert existence, the consciousness of Self that pervadeth all being, intelligence, the senses and the mind and the senses' fivefold quest; with desire, hatred, pleasure, pain, and their fleshly abode; and also awareness and steadfastness; all these are a part of this Field of life.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Summing up in one stanza more than one system of philosophy, the author of the Gītā has here made fertile ground for casuistry.

### XIII. 7

Now is the wisdom by which rich harvest shall be garnered;

Unconquerable humility, modesty of spirit, harmlessness, forgiveness, devotion to the preceptor, and purity, steadiness, and self-control.

### XIII. 8

This wisdom is indifference to the clamor of the senses, and of the conscious self; knowledge of the woe of birth, death, old age, sickness and pain.

### XIII. 9

It is to be detached and to identify the self with no other self, howsoever well-beloved; it is serenity in the occurrence of the desirable and the undesirable, in pleasant and in painful experience;

### XIII. 10

It is steadfast devotion to Me by the constant practice of meditation which uniteth to Me; it is the search for solitude, and apathy in the assemblies of men;

### XIII. 11

It is constant pursuit of spiritual truth, the perception of the purpose of knowledge.

I declare that the practice of these things is wisdom, and that all opposed to it is folly.

XIII. 12

Again I will declare that which is the object of wisdom, which to know is to compel immortality—the beginningless Supreme Spirit, nameless, for no word nameth That as being, no word nameth That as not being.

XIII. 13

Lo, everywhere are the hands and feet of That, everywhere are the eyes of That, everywhere are the ears of That, everywhere is That, pervading all things throughout the Universe.

XIII. 14

That giveth light by the power of all the senses, yet is That without the senses; That is Infinity, yet It sustaineth this transitory world; devoid of all qualities,<sup>4</sup> yet all qualities It enjoyeth;

<sup>4</sup> In Hindu philosophy, the "qualities" of an object are listed as spiritual (or pertaining to the intelligence), powerful, and ignorant, literally, dark, (contrast Western philosophy whose categories are, "true, good, and beautiful," to which may be added "useful"). These properties are conceived as pertaining to the phenomenal world. The poet would here say that the Absolute shares in the play of these forces, yet is not contained by them.

### XIII. 15

Within all beings, beyond all beings, changeless in change, whose essence is subtlety, That is incomprehensible; It standeth afar off and It is very close at hand.

### XIII. 16

Manifested in the divided appearance of many beings, It yet remaineth whole; <sup>5</sup> It sustaineth all things; It devoureth all; It createth all;

### XIII. 17

It is the light behind light; It is steeper than darkness; It is knowledge; It is the object of knowledge; It is the goal of knowledge; It dwelleth in the heart of everything.

### XIII. 18

Thus in brief have I explained to thee this Field of experience, the harvest of knowledge and the use of the harvest, which, understood by My devotee, enableth him to share My Being.

<sup>5</sup> One in essence, though apparently differing, like foam and water.

### XIII. 19

Now shalt thou learn that the nature of this world <sup>6</sup> and Eternal Consciousness are without beginning, and that from nature are born all forms and attributes and all their changes.

### XIII. 20

The Nature of the world is said to have made the instrument of our flesh and its vibrating senses, but the Spirit <sup>7</sup> soundeth the modes of pleasure and of pain.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Prakṛiti, roughly translated by Nature (see note Chap. V verse 14), means all the substance of life, physical, mental and spiritual—all, in fact, that is not consciousness. Nature must not be understood to mean matter, but rather that which underlies matter and of which modern science possibly indicates the existence. (See Telang, *Bhagavad Gītā*, "Sacred Books of the East," p. 107, note 3.) "Interpreted idealistically, as suggested by Professor Bhandarkar,—by means of knowledge of the Soul the unreality of these manifestations is understood and nature is destroyed."

Prakṛiti is Māyā; it is conceived that God objectifies Himself in Māyā in order to perceive His subjective Self—the 'I am not' confirming the 'I am.' In this substance or nature of things it is also conceived that three qualities are inherent, contained in all aspects of matter and mind, and including them all—the three Guṇas, the modes, forms, attributes or qualities before mentioned (See Verse 14), *Sattwa*, spirit or intelligence, *Rajas*, power or energy, *Tamas*, ignorance, matter or inertia. In their widest implication, Sattwa pertains to space, Rajas to time and Tamas to cause and effect.

<sup>7</sup> Purusha, translated by Eternal Consciousness, in a previous verse, is the name for the Absolute in its aspect of consciousness

### XIII. 21

For the spirit enfolded in nature and there united to nature's modes, crieth, "I am happy. I am sorrowful. Lo, I am led astray." Thus is the ego brought into birth and rebirth of good and evil fate.

### XIII. 22

Yet the Eternal Consciousness abideth in this Spirit, and lo, within this flesh It is Witness, Guide, Sustainer, That which knoweth all experience, Which is the Over-Lord, the Ultimate Self.

### XIII. 23

Whoso hath thus understood the Eternal Consciousness and the nature of this world and its modes, whatsoever his way of life, hath become free. The Truth shall burn all his acts, so that they shall no more cause his return into the labyrinth of rebirth.

### XIII. 24

Some there be who by meditation and by the purified heart behold the Ultimate Self within the core of

---

—it is the Sanskrit word for Person; all individual manifestations of this consciousness is a part of the eternal absolute Person.

<sup>8</sup> A very free rendering of this verse is given, enabling the Western reader to follow the implication of the text.

their own intelligence. Others reach It by the path of knowledge, and still others by means of deeds.

XIII. 25

And still others, never thus attaining to the truth, yet hear of It by rumor, and therein finding refuge, worship It in this intimation. They, even they also, surmount Death.

XIII. 26

Know then, Arjuna, that whatever is hath sprung from the seed of the Spirit sown by the Reaper of the harvest in the field of this Existence.

XIII. 27

He seeth truly, who seeth the Supreme Existence in all things, and Deathlessness in all Death.

XIII. 28

Since he now beholdeth the Eternal Being in all beings, how can he injure by that Self either himself or another?

XIII. 29

He seeth that Nature alone is the performer, and not the Self, for the Self is still.

### XIII. 30

When he knoweth that each separate existence issueth from One and returneth unto that One alone, he then himself becometh Brahman the Supreme.

### XIII. 31

Being without beginning, untainted by attribute, this Supreme Self, though it dwell in the flesh, is actionless, Arjuna, and unstained.

### XIII. 32

As the pervading Ether, because of its subtlety is untainted though it permeateth all things, so the Self, existent in all forms of life, is in no wise touched.

### XIII. 33

As a single sun filleth a world with light, so doth the Great Harvester, who abideth in the Field of this existence, illumine experience.

### XIII. 34

Those who with the eye of wisdom distinguish between the Field and the Reaper, and understand that



freedom from the nature of the world is possible to the Self, they indeed reach the Supreme.

*The end of the Thirteenth Chapter, designated*

THE WAY OF DISCRIMINATION BETWEEN EXPERIENCE  
AND HIM WHO REAPETH EXPERIENCE

## FOURTEENTH CHAPTER

### XIV. 1

The Blessed One said:

I will reveal again to thee knowledge supreme above all other by which the sages after this life have compelled Perfection.

### XIV. 2

Abiding by this knowledge and having attained My being, they come not again into the cycle of life, nor are they caught again by dissolution.

### XIV. 3

Great Nature is my womb, O descendant of Kings; in it I cast the seed whence manifold life is born.

### XIV. 4

I am the womb of every womb; I am the seed producing every form of existence.

#### XIV. 5

Intelligence, Power, Ignorance; <sup>1</sup> these the modes of Nature, Great Prince, that bind fast the indestructible Soul within the embodied form.

#### XIV. 6

Intelligence, luminous and sinless, by very purity may fetter the soul, attaching it to happiness and to knowledge.

#### XIV. 7

Power is of the nature of passion, and giveth rise to thirst and to attachment; it bindeth fast the embodied Soul, Arjuna, by love of action.

#### XIV. 8

But Ignorance, born of deception, deludeth all beings, fastening the Soul, O descendant of Kings, to indolence and sleep.

#### XIV. 9

Intelligence fasteneth the spirit to well-being, and Power to thirst and desire that inciteth activity, Arjuna; while Ignorance verily darkeneth discrimination and attacheth to misconception.

<sup>1</sup> See note, verses 19-20 Chap. XIII.

#### XIV. 10

Intelligence ariseth, Royal Prince, and conquereth Power and Materialism; Power ariseth, dominating Intelligence and Materialism with its activities; Ignorance overcometh Intelligence and Power by confusion of understanding.

#### XIV. 11

When through every portal the light of knowledge shineth forth, know then, Arjuna, that Intelligence holdeth dominion over that abode.

#### XIV. 12

Avarice, agitation, many undertakings, unrest, desire, abideth where Power is, O Bull amongst Men.

#### XIV. 13

Hopelessness, inertia, confusion and self-delusion spring up where ruleth Ignorance, Royal Son!

#### XIV. 14

If a man dieth under the wings of Intelligence, he is borne up into the immaculate regions of those who worship the Truth.

#### XIV. 15

Meeting death in the domain of Power, the Soul is reborn into a life of compelling activity; but he who dieth Ignorant is condemned to rebirth from the womb of Unreason.

#### XIV. 16

Pure the fruit of Intelligence, bitter the fruit of Power, but poisoned is the yield of Ignorance.

#### XIV. 17

From Intelligence blossometh wisdom, and from Power greed, but confusion, self-delusion and stupor are the triple fruit of Ignorance.

#### XIV. 18

The pursuers of Intelligence ascend; the Power-loving are stationary, and the Ignorant sink to the lowest level.

#### XIV. 19

When the Seer perceiveth that these three qualities are the sole directors of this drama, and that above them abideth ever the silent Witness, then indeed hath he attained to the mood of Brahma.

#### XIV. 20

Thus ascending beyond these three modes from which his body hath been evolved, he is freed from birth, pain and decay, and attaineth to immortality.

#### XIV. 21

Arjuna then questioned Kṛishṇa:

By what mark, Lord, is he known who hath passed beyond these three modes? What is his conduct, and by what means overcometh he them?

#### XIV. 22

The Blessed One replied:

He who desireth not the light of Intelligence nor the works of Power nor the delusions brought into being by Ignorance, Descendant of Kings, nor hateth their manifestations;

#### XIV. 23

He whose back is turned to them, yet is aware of their play, who is self-founded and never swerving;

#### XIV. 24

To whom pleasure and pain are alike, to whom the sod, the stone, the lump of gold, are one, to whom

the face of love and loneliness are the same, to whom praise and blame are equal;

XIV. 25

Who is one in honour and dishonour, the same to friend and foe, detached from undertakings; know that this man is he indeed who hath surmounted the influences of this world.

XIV. 26

And such an one serving Me with single devotion, passing beyond these qualities, is fitted to become one with the Eternal.

XIV. 27

For I am the embodiment of That Absolute One, the changeless essence of Immortality, the everlasting Way of Self-Realization, and the Bliss that defieeth all comparison.

*The end of the Fourteenth Chapter, designated*

THE DISCERNMENT OF THE WORLD'S THREE MODES

## FIFTEENTH CHAPTER

### XV. 1

Kṛishṇa spoke these words, saying:

Existence is an everlasting tree<sup>1</sup> whose roots are in Heaven, whose branches are below, whose leaves are the sacred hymns.

### XV. 2

Its branches reach to heaven and to earth; it is nourished by Nature's three attributes,<sup>2</sup> which quicken into sensation all its buds; its roots strike to the human heart, impelling good and evil deeds.

### XV. 3, 4

The eyes of men perceive not its changing form, nor its end, nor its beginning, nor that which supporteth it; but do thou, with the sharp axe of indif-

<sup>1</sup> The comparison here is with the famous Indian Banyan tree whose roots fall from the branches to the earth, sustaining as well as nourishing it.

<sup>2</sup> Intelligence, Power, Ignorance.



ference, cleave asunder this firm rooted tree of illusion that thou mayest seek the goal from whence the wise never return. For I dwell not in this ever active, growing tree, but in that rootless Essence from which it springeth up.

XV. 5

In that Eternal place the Illuminated ones abide who are freed from delusion, who have overcome pride and human bondage and good and evil, pleasures and pain; who dwell ever in the Self, and the lamp of whose desire is blown out.

XV. 6

Where the sun illumineth not, nor walketh the moon, nor is kindled any fire; there is My uttermost dwelling place, going whither none return.

XV. 7

An eternal fraction of Myself is it, which born a soul and drawing to itself five senses and a sixth that is mind, dwelleth within this apparition of Nature.

XV. 8

As the wind halteth on a flower and beareth away its perfume, so doth the Eternal carry from one life to another the essence of Himself.

## XV. 9

For He presideth over the hearing, the sight, the touch, the taste and smell, the sentient mind, and thus knoweth He life.

## XV. 10

The foolish descry Him not as He passeth from body to body, residing in the flesh and enjoying the drama of Nature and the color of her attributes: only those whose eyes are kindled with wisdom recognize His presence.

## XV. 11

The Yogis <sup>3</sup> practicing austerities find Him planted within themselves; but, alas, the deluded whose minds are unpurified, even though they practice many austerities, discern Him not.

## XV. 12

Know the glory of the sun to be Mine which illuminates the whole world, and the effulgence of the moon, and the splendor of the fire.

<sup>3</sup> Here one can translate Yogis very easily; for in this context yogi and seeker are synonymous.

## XV. 13

I impregnate the earth with My energy that sustaineth all things; every herb is nourished by My silver Essence that filleth the cup of the moon.

## XV. 14

I become the fire of Life and dwell in the bodies of living creatures; I am their breath; I nourish Myself in them.

## XV. 15

I am the heart of all beings, their memory and their perception: it is I who abide within, when these are lost. I am the end of all understanding; I am the first of the sacred books; I am the author of all wisdom and the knower behind all Knowledge.

## XV. 16

Every being is twofold—eternal and transitory. Appearance is fleeting, but My subtle Reality remaineth forever.

## XV. 17

But higher than all heights abideth That other, the Supreme Consciousness, called the Undivided Being,

the Immutable Lord, permeating all worlds and sustaining them.

XV. 18

Because I transcend the Perishable and am beyond even the Imperishable, the sacred books celebrate Me as Supreme.

XV. 19

He who adoreth Me in all forms and in every mood of Life, O descendant of Kings, hath attained all wisdom.

XV. 20

Thus have I made known to thee, Arjuna, this secret of secrets. To comprehend this is to attain the highest wisdom and to accomplish all duties, O Sinless One.

*The end of the Fifteenth Chapter, designated*

THE WAY TO THE SUPREME SPIRIT

## SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

### XVI. 1

Now spoke the Blessed One, saying:

Fearlessness, purity of heart, steadfastness in knowledge and in practice, generosity, and well-governed senses; piety, the study of holy books, austerity, prowess;

### XVI. 2

Forbearance, truth, serenity, self-abnegation, peace, compassion, gentleness, humility, singleness of purpose, absence of malice and envy;

### XVI. 3

A high and forgiving spirit, courage, purity, friendliness; these are born to the divine condition, O descendant of Kings.

### XVI. 4

But he who is ostentatious, arrogant and self-loving, quarrelsome, harsh and ignorant, is born, Arjuna, to the condition of destruction.

## XVI. 5

They of divine condition are prepared for self-illumination, but the darkened souls are brought to bondage; be of good cheer, Arjuna, for thou art born to heavenly state!

## XVI. 6

There are two manifestations of beings in this world, the divine and the destructive. I have already described to thee, at length, the divine; hear now of the destructive souls.

## XVI. 7

They know not either that which satisfieth nor that which misleadeth the senses—they have neither purity nor ceremony, for no truth is in them.

## XVI. 8

They say, "The universe hath no foundation; it is full of change and it is Godless; what else should be the cause of it but meaningless activity and lust?"

## XVI. 9

So are these derelict souls without compass, full of fierce deeds, born enemies of the world for its destruction.

XVI. 10

Their very arteries burn with lust; they are drunk with vanity, arrogance and display; they are deluded by false ideas, they tread the circle of sinful acts.

XVI. 11

Immeasurable cares beset them until death; they are forever unstable save in lust.

XVI. 12

Trapped by a hundred hopes, lashed by anger and desire, they stoop to any means for the acquisition of wealth and pleasure;

XVI. 13

Saying, "This wealth hath been won by me today; this goal shall I reach tomorrow; that good fortune is mine, and this shall also be mine.

XVI. 14

"This foe hath been slain by me, and others also I shall destroy. I am lord, I enjoy, I have attained, I am powerful and happy.

XVI. 15

“I am rich and well-born. Who else is equal to me? I will sacrifice, I will make gifts, I will rejoice.” Thus are they deluded by ignorance;

XVI. 16

And thus by fond images, bewildered, wrapped in the net of deception, pleasure-mad, they are hurled into the abyss.

XVI. 17

Conceited, haughty, filled with the pride and the intoxication of wealth, they perform sacrifices in name only, out of ostentation, unmindful of their own motives.

XVI. 18

Possessed of egoism, power, insolence, lust and wrath, these malignant people hate Me within their own flesh, as in their fellow-creatures.

XVI. 19

These malicious and cruel evil-doers, most degraded of men, I hurl back into the world perpetually, to be reborn from the wombs of destruction.



XVI. 20

Ensnared by recurring births without Me, they fall and fall again, Arjuna, into darker abysses still.

XVI. 21

Threefold is this gate to hell—the gate of Lust, the gate of Wrath, and the gate of Greed.

XVI. 22

The man who avoideth these three dark doors, O son of Kings, doeth well, and goeth to the Highest.

XVI. 23

But he that setteth aside the ordinances of the Holy powers, acting under the impulse of desire, attaineth not perfection, nor happiness, nor the Supreme Being.

XVI. 24

So let the Holy Books guide thy ceremonials, for thus instructed, thou shalt perform thy duty.

*The end of the Sixteenth Chapter, designated*

THE DIVINE AND DIABOLIC ATTRIBUTES

## SEVENTEENTH CHAPTER

### XVII. 1

Now Arjuna spoke, questioning in these words:

To what do they attain, Kṛishṇa, who set aside the precepts of the Holy Books, yet perform sacrifice with spiritual austerity? Are they in the domain of intelligence, or of power, or of ignorance?

### XVII. 2

To whom Kṛishṇa replied, saying:

Threefold is the faith inherent in the nature of man, pertaining to Life's three domains of Intelligence, of Power, of Ignorance. Harken that I may disclose them unto thee.

### XVII. 3

According to the constitution of his heart is the discipline of each man, Arjuna; his discipline is his character; <sup>1</sup> verily, he is the fruit of his austerity.

<sup>1</sup> "Out of the heart cometh the issues of life."

## XVII. 4

The Spiritual man pursueth celestial beings, the Powerful devoteth himself to demons and Titans, and the Ignorant revereth the gnomes and trolls.

## XVII. 5, 6

Those men who practice severe austerities not enjoined by the Holy Books, self-intoxicated souls given over to ostentation and egoism, possessed by desire and love of power, torture Me who dwell within them, in every organ of their bodies: behold, they are the devotees of the powers of darkness.

## XVII. 7

Even what men eat and drink is characterized by their qualities, and is threefold. Their spiritual endeavors, exercises and acts of sacrifice—these too are threefold.

## XVII. 8

The food which augmenteth vitality, energy, strength, health, cheerfulness and appetite, which is savoury and oleaginous, substantial and agreeable, is enjoyed by the intelligent.

## XVII. 9

The food that is bitter, sour, saline, excessively hot, pungent, dry and burning, is liked by the Power-loving, and is productive of suffering, sorrow and sickness.

## XVII. 10

That which is stale and tasteless, which is unsavoury and kept over night, which is not pure, is the food liked by the Ignorant.

## XVII. 11

The way of the Intelligent, say the Scriptures, is the way of single purpose; nor is it followed for other reward than the attainment of its own end.

## XVII. 12

That way which is followed in search of reward and for vanity, know it, O best of heroes, to be the way of the Power-loving.

## XVII. 13

But that path heedlessly pursued without precepts or ceremonies, prayers, rituals or charities, is of the Ignorant.

## XVII. 14

Worship of the Deities, of the twice-born, of the teachings of the wise: purity, straightforwardness, continence, and amity—these are the disciplines of the body.

## XVII. 15

Speech that is truthful, without malice, without scandal and without evil, guided by the example of the Sacred Books, this is the discipline of the tongue.

## XVII. 16

Serenity of mind, kindness, silence, self-control, honesty of motive—this is the discipline of the mind.

## XVII. 17

And this threefold austerity practiced by self-dedicated men, with great devotion and free from the lure of rewards, is said to be of the intelligence.

## XVII. 18

Those austerities practiced with the object of gaining welcome, honour and worship, and with ostentation, are characteristic of a Power-loving, unstable person.

## XVII. 19

And those performed by men addicted to foolish notions, such as self-torture or self-advancement at the expense of another, are of the Ignorant.

## XVII. 20

Even the giving of gifts should be chastened by discrimination; they should be presented in a fit place at a fit time to a worthy person and without expectation of gratitude.

## XVII. 21

The gifts of the Power-loving are characterized either by reluctance or the expectation of reward and recompense.

## XVII. 22

The gift that is given out of place and season to undeserving persons without respect for them, and with contempt, characterizeth the giver as Ignorant.

## XVII. 23

*Om, Tat, Sat:* <sup>2</sup> this hath been declared the triple designation of Brahman, embodied in the threefold

<sup>2</sup> Yes, That Exists: The Hindu affirmation meaning, God exists.

Scriptures: books of Rituals, Sacred Hymns and Sacrifices.

#### XVII. 24

Therefore, uttering *Om*, with acts of Sacrifice, with gifts and austerities, the followers of the Scriptures proceed always.

#### XVII. 25

And uttering *Tat*, without aiming at reward, performing various acts of sacrifice, with discipline and gifts, obtain they liberation.

#### XVII. 26

The word *Sat* is used to mean reality and goodness; and so also, Arjuna, the word *Sat* is used to express an act that is auspicious.

#### XVII. 27

Steadiness in sacrifice, austerity and giving is also called *Sat*; as also any act of devotion.

## XVII. 28

Whatever is sacrificed, whatever is given, whatever penance is performed, and whatever is done without faith, is *Asat*—unreal—both here and hereafter.

*The end of the Seventeenth Chapter, designated*

THE WAY OF THE THREEFOLD DEVOTION



## EIGHTEENTH CHAPTER

### XVIII. 1

Arjuna now spoke saying:

O longhaired mighty-armed Kṛishṇa, Slayer of thy foes, I desire to learn the secret of renunciation and the mystery of self-abnegation.

### XVIII. 2

And Kṛishṇa replied thus to the questions of Arjuna:

To renounce is to abandon desire-bound action, say the sages; and to give up the rewards of deeds is self-abnegation.

### XVIII. 3

Some teachers there be who declare that all action should be relinquished as evil, whilst others say that the acts of sacrifice and self-discipline alone should be retained.

#### XVIII. 4

Hear now My words, O Tiger amongst Men!  
The final truth regarding renunciation is threefold:

#### XVIII. 5

Deeds of sacrifice, alms-giving, and self-discipline should not be abandoned, but should indeed be performed, for they are purifying to the wise.

#### XVIII. 6

But even these acts, Arjuna, must be done with single mind, and without hope of reward. This is My final word, this My absolute law.

#### XVIII. 7

Thou shalt not deviate from thy ordained task, for to abandon it is to fall into the delusion of Ignorance.

#### XVIII. 8

He who in fear and weariness of flesh giveth up his task and flattereth himself that he hath thereby renounced longed-for Power, defeateth his own end.

### XVIII. 9

When the deed is done because it ought to be done, and not for the sake of reward—only then, Arjuna, hath the noble Way of intelligence been found.

### XVIII. 10

The quiet spirit piercing all doubts, neither avoideth the unpleasant, nor seeketh after the pleasant task.

### XVIII. 11

No living being can exist without action, but he who relinquisheth the desire for the reward may be called a free man.

### XVIII. 12

Threefold the fruit of every act: sweet, bitter, tasteless; which, except by those who are unattached and who have no thought of gain, is garnered even in lives to come.

### XVIII. 13

Learn from Me, mighty-armed Arjuna, the five causes of every act, which is taught by the ancient wisdom:

XVIII. 14

The body, the I who willeth, the various senses, their functions, and the presiding deity behind each one of these senses;

XVIII. 15

These are the five that cause whatsoever act any man doeth, be it of body, mind or speech, be it evil or good.

XVIII. 16

This is truth: a man is therefore of clouded understanding who deemeth his Eternal part the instigator of his deeds.

XVIII. 17

But who vaunteth not himself as the doer, no deed polluteth his being; and though he slay all this army, he is unfettered by the act.

XVIII. 18

Knowledge, the Knowing, and the Knower compose the threefold nature of each act—lo, the artist, the pattern and the designing thereof, are a threefold whole.

XVIII. 19

But the knowledge, the doer, and the deed are distinguished in My ancient teaching by those three separate influences <sup>1</sup> that colour all existence.

XVIII. 20

Knowledge of the Spirit seeth the one indestructible Essence in all beings, undifferentiated, unseparate in the separate.

XVIII. 21

But that knowledge is of Power which deemeth each being as distinct, apart, and forever divided.

XVIII. 22

And dark Ignorance cloudeth the minds of them that ignore the One, and cling to a detached fragment of experience as though it were the whole of truth.

XVIII. 23

An act performed with serenity, without love of reward, and with neither taste nor distaste, is indeed of the Spirit.

<sup>1</sup> Gunas.

XVIII. 24

But the act of the Power-loving is urgent with desire and foameth with effort and conceit.

XVIII. 25

The act of the Ignorant is heedless, blind, and self-destructive.

XVIII. 26

The doer who is detached, imbued with fortitude and zestful, unaffected in success or failure, he is indeed Spiritual.

XVIII. 27

The passionate man desirous of rewards, greedy, malignant, impure, easily elated and dejected, he is Power-loving.

XVIII. 28

Disloyal, vulgar, arrogant, treacherous, malicious, indolent, despondent and procrastinating, such a man is Ignorant.

XVIII. 29

Now learn also how intellect and fortitude are tintured by each quality which, in their distinct aspect, I will make plain to thee.

XVIII. 30

The good mind and the intelligent is that which knoweth the way of work and renunciation, right and wrong action, that which should be feared and that which trusted, that which enslaveth and that which freeth.

XVIII. 31

Power-loving is that intellect which discerneth not with clarity the difference between religion and irreligion, work and idleness, right and wrong.

XVIII. 32

That mind which taketh irreligion for religion and considereth all things to be what they are not is shrouded in the darkness of Ignorance.

XVIII. 33

Intelligent and good is that courage and self-control which holdeth the mind, the vital energies, and the senses of a man to their proper functioning.

XVIII. 34

But that degree of courage by which man regulateth himself for the sake of reward, whether in religion,

desire, or wealth, that is the courage of the lover of Power, Arjuna.

XVIII. 35

And the endurance by which a dull man beareth the yoke of evil dreams, fear, grief, despondency, self-delusion, freeing himself not from them; that indeed is but the fortitude of the Ignorant.

XVIII. 36

Now hear from Me, O Bull of Royal Kings, of the threefold happiness: that happiness is of intelligence and of the spirit which endureth, banishing sorrow, and is enjoyed by the test of long habit.

XVIII. 37

Sired by self-illumination, foaled in self-realization, though bitter at first to the taste, it is sweet in experience, and distilled from a tranquil mind.

XVIII. 38

That is the happiness of the Powerful which the senses brew from their desire; it is ambrosial at the outset, but it turneth in the end to poison.



### XVIII. 39

The happiness of the Ignorant springeth up from deception and therein endeth, after a brief interval of slumber, sloth and ignorance.

### XVIII. 40

Thus even the gods and all other beings are under the dominion of these three qualities that arise out of the Nature of Existence.

### XVIII. 41

Among all the Castes, their duties are apportioned according to the characteristics of each.

### XVIII. 42

The Brahman's nature is manifested by these qualities of Spirit—harmony of mind and senses, purity, patience and self-discipline, self-abnegation, uprightness, knowledge, self-realization, and firm faith.

### XVIII. 43

Prowess, energy, endurance, skill, dauntlessness, generosity, inherent in its nature, mark the Warrior caste.

### XVIII. 44

The disposition of the third Caste of Merchants is for trade, agriculture and the rearing of cattle; and natural to the fourth Caste—the Toilers—is the duty of service.

### XVIII. 45

Adhering each to his own path, man compelleth perfection. Hear now from Me how this may be accomplished.

### XVIII. 46

The performance of his own task is a worship by which a man findeth Him from Whom is the evolution of all things, and by Whom all this existence is pervaded.

### XVIII. 47

For better is one's own duty though imperfectly done than the duty of another well performed. He who doeth the task ordained by his own nature incurreth no evil.

### XVIII. 48

A man should not relinquish the task to which he is born, Arjuna, though it be attended with fault, for

all undertakings are enveloped by faults, as fire is enveloped by smoke.

XVIII. 49

One whose intellect is nowhere attached, who hath subdued his heart, whose desires have fled, attaineth supreme perfection by renunciation, and hath become the self that is without action.

XVIII. 50

Hear from Me, Arjuna, how on reaching such perfection, he attaineth to Brahman, that Supreme consummation of knowledge.

XVIII. 51

Endued with a pure intellect, subduing the body and the senses with fortitude, heeding not the summons of the world, abandoning affection and aversion;

XVIII. 52

Betaking himself to solitude, eating but little; with body, speech and mind controlled, engaged ever in concentrated meditation;

### XVIII. 53

Dispassionate, forswearing the moods of self, its power, pride, lust, wrath, and riches; free from all thought of possession, and tranquil, thus he is fitted to become Brahman.

### XVIII. 54

He is enthroned in Brahman; he is silent; he grieveth not nor hath he any desire. He seeth the same Being in every being; he adoreth Me; he becometh through adoration My very Self.

### XVIII. 55

By adoration man apprehendeth that I exist, What and Who I am; and thus knowing My nature he forthwith entereth into Me.

### XVIII. 56

Though he performeth all his tasks, it is by taking refuge in Me, through My grace, that he attaineth to the Eternal Immutable State.

### XVIII. 57

His consciousness is saturated by Me and all he doeth is an offering unto Me. I am the end of his

endeavor. Therefore, do thou, with all thy mind, fix thy thought upon Me.

XVIII. 58

Rivet thyself to Me, and thou shalt share My grace and overcome all obstacles; but if from self-deception thou wilt not hear Me, surely thou shalt perish!

XVIII. 59

If, filled with conceit of thy self, thou sayest, "I will not fight," vain is thy resolve; for thy nature itself will constrain thee unto battle.

XVIII. 60

In the shackles of thine own destiny, Arjuna, forged by thine own nature art thou, and what in thy delusion thou wouldst evade, that, despite thyself, thou shalt surely bring to pass.

XVIII. 61

The Deity, Arjuna, dwelleth in the core of all things, and in the dance of His appearances.<sup>2</sup> He maketh all things to turn like puppets, upon the wheel of Time.

<sup>2</sup> Dance of His appearances = Māyā.

### XVIII. 62

Seek refuge in Him, therefore, with all thy heart, Royal Prince, and by His grace shalt thou attain supreme peace and everlasting repose.

### XVIII. 63

Thus hath wisdom been declared to thee by Me; more profound than all profundities; reflect fully upon it, and act according to thy choice.

### XVIII. 64

Listen yet once again to My excellent word, of all My words the most profound, which because thou art dearly beloved by Me I will reveal to thee for thy good.

### XVIII. 65

Give thy mind to Me, be devoted to Me, sacrifice to Me; bow down to Me. Thus shalt thou reach Myself; truly do I promise it unto thee for thou art dear to Me.

### XVIII. 66

Forsake all other duties and precepts and come unto Me; I will liberate thee from sin; therefore, be of good cheer.

### XVIII. 67

Now these things must never be spoken by thee to one who practiceth not the rules of self-discipline, nor to one who serveth not Me, nor to one of little faith.

### XVIII. 68

But whosoever with supreme devotion to Me shalt impart this deeply profound teaching to My chosen one, he without doubt shalt come unto Me.

### XVIII. 69

Among men there is none who can render more noble service to Me than this, nor can there be any dearer to Me on earth than he.

### XVIII. 70

And I say unto thee that he who shalt ponder the words that I and thou have spoken together, attaineth to the distinction of him who cometh to Me upon the Way of Knowledge.

### XVIII. 71

The man free of malice and endowed with faith, who listeneth perpetually to these words, shall also be liberated and uplifted to the company of those who have attained the high world of righteous deeds.

### XVIII. 72

Have My words been heard by thee, Arjuna, with an attentive mind? Hath the delusion of thy ignorance been destroyed, O Compellor of Fortune?

### XVIII. 73

Arjuna replied to Kṛishṇa, saying:

Destroyed now is my delusion, O Kṛishṇa, and through Thy grace have I regained the memory of mine own perfection; I am firm, my doubts are gone, I will obey Thy word.

### XVIII. 74

Here came to an end the dialogue between Arjuna and Kṛishṇa, and now Sañjaya spoke, saying to King Dhṛitarāshṭra these final words:

Thus have I heard this sublime and dazzling converse between Kṛishṇa and the high-souled Arjuna, and the mighty import of it hath made my hair to stand on end.

### XVIII. 75

Through the grace of Vyāsa, the poet, have I listened to this supreme and most profound wisdom of Self-realization; Kṛishṇa, the Lord of Realization, Himself declaring it.



XVIII. 76

As I remember and again remember, O King, these holy and resplendent words spoken between Kṛishṇa and Arjuna, I rejoice, I rejoice!

XVIII. 77

As I remember and again remember the amazing form of Kṛishṇa, great is my wonder, O King; and I rejoice, I rejoice!

XVIII. 78

Wherever is Kṛishṇa the Lord of Realization, wherever is Arjuna, the Wielder of the Bow, there is Beauty, Strength, Glory, Humanity, and eternal Justice: such is my Belief.

Thus in the holy Bhagavad-Gītā, the Essence of the Upanishads from the mouth of the God, the Science of the Brahman, the Scripture of Self-realization, the Dialogue between Śrī Kṛishṇa and Arjuna, endeth the *Eighteenth Chapter, designated: The Way of Liberation is Renunciation.*

*Here endeth the Bhagavad-Gītā. Peace! Peace!  
Peace be to all!*













